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[NURSE SEATON'S PRISON.]

THE MYSTIC EYE OF HEATHCOTE.

CHAPTER XX.

In durance vile here must I wake and weep,
And all my frowny couch in sorrow steep. Burns.
We must now turn back and look after the fortunes of good Nurse Seaton, whom we left senseless and dying in the old dungeon.

She awoke to a faint and feeble sense of living in the semi-twilight of a small, square room. The walls were of solid masonry, and the one square window, or rather door, was heavily barred, yet it opened into the free world, for a faint gleam of sunlight flickered across the rusty bolts.

Poor Margaret watched it with a feeling of childish delight, for it seemed a bright link that still bound her to the living world from which she had been so long isolated—a messenger sent to convince her that she was yet alive, and not in the chill realms of death as she half believed herself to be.

Faintly and brightly the golden winter sunlight crept into the lonely prison, and as she watched it Margaret's life and reason and memory seemed to reassert their power.

But she was as weak as a little child, and her hands were thin and white. With a thrill of inexpressible horror she recalled her grave-like imprisonment, the pangs of starvation, the wicked, taunting face of Lady Heathcote, and the terrible apparition of the spectre.

What did it all mean? Was she going mad? She put her hand to her brow. It was cool, and her brain seemed clear. A small table stood beside her couch, on which were some biscuits and a bottle of wine, and near at hand was a solitary chair. She made an inventory of her scanty surroundings, and wondered where in all the wide world she was and what had befallen her.

Very slowly her memory brought back the past, but at last it all seemed to sweep before her like scenes in a panorama.

She remembered all her happy life at Heathcote, then the terrible events that followed Lord Heath-

cote's death, and the deadly peril in which she had left her darling little Lady Grace. Then with a sudden thrill she thought of the wonderful opal, the old Heathcote keeper-ring which contained the secret of the hidden treasures. With her eyes closed she fancied how it lay in all its mystic splendour in the very hiding-place where her hands concealed it, lay there safe and secure, beyond the finding of any living mortal save herself. Lady Heathcote would never get it in her clutches, or the hidden Heathcote treasures either, and Margaret smiled to herself, feeling a grim satisfaction at the result of her own fortitude and endurance.

But after a brief space of silent exultation she began to ponder over her own situation, and to chafe at the bonds that held her. There was so much work for her to do, so many wrongs to be righted, so many mysteries to be cleared up; and there she lay weak and powerless, shut in by four solid walls. Would she ever get free again?

While she pondered thus the moments glided by, and the golden winter sunlight faded from off the rusty bars, leaving this little prison room in the cheerless gloom of closing day.

The prisoner lay almost breathless in her impatient suspense, her thin, white face clearly defined in the deepening shadows, her hands clasped in wordless supplication.

And, as if in response to her prayer, she heard a low rap, then, as if by magic, one of the heavy stone blocks that formed the wall slid slowly from its place, and the sudden glare of a lantern half blinded her.

When she regained her sight she saw the bent figure of an old woman, who leered at her with wicked eyes, and a wrinkled, witch-like face, as she placed a tray of food upon the table.

Margaret struggled to a sitting posture, her heart almost bursting with excitement; but before she could utter a single word with a mocking laugh the old creature disappeared, and the heavy block of stone slid slowly back into its place.

Margaret Seaton looked on like one in a dream

half believing herself under the spell of some terrible enchantment; but after a time, grown weary with wondering at her fate, she put out her thin hand for a few of the biscuits and a taste of the wine, and soon after she fell asleep.

Other days followed, blank, monotonous, tedious beyond all description.

Each day, as the sunlight faded, and always preceded by the mysterious, warning tap, the heavy granite block slid slowly aside, and the little old woman hobbled in and placed her tray of provisions upon the table, maintaining a provoking silence that no entreaties could induce her to break.

Once poor Margaret grew frantic, and when the old creature was hobbling away, with a wicked leer in her shining eyes that told how she enjoyed her victim's agony, she seized her by the arm, and, dragging her back into the centre of the room, entreated her in Heaven's name to tell her where she was and why she was imprisoned; but the old woman only gave a knowing chuckle for answer, and, slipping from her grasp like a shadow, darted away, and the great stone, like an inexorable fate, slid back into its place.

Margaret sat down upon the edge of her bed in utter despair. Her iron constitution was giving way, and her stern, strong reason was failing her.

In a few weeks longer, if this terrible state of things lasted, she would be a raving maniac.

So thought poor Margaret, yet the weeks lengthened into months, the winter ended, and summer came. The sunlight gleamed upon her prison bars with a warmer radiance, and the breeze that flattered in at intervals was sweet with the odour of blossoms.

The summer faded, and the strip of sky beyond the barred window began to take on the cold, clear opal that denotes the approach of autumn.

Still no change came, and long-deferred hope made poor Margaret's heart sick.

Her feverish impatience gave place to a sullen quiet, her eager longing for freedom settled into a kind of apathetic content, her eagle eyes lost their fire, she chafed and fretted no longer, but sat from sun to sun with her listless hands upon her lap.

Then there came a blank, a deep, unconscious gloom, which seemed to be death itself.

From this she awoke again, with the salt sea-breeze in her face, and the peculiar, undulating motion of the waves beneath her. She was far, far out at sea, beneath and around her nothing but a waste of waters, and overhead a threatening sky, lit by a glimmer of feeble stars, and a pale, lurid moon; and she sat in a frail little shell of a boat, without oar or rudder, completely at the mercy of the waves.

CHAPTER XXI.

Oh, if thou teach me to believe this sorrow,
Teach thou this sorrow how to make me die.

King John.

LADY GRACE had been at school six months, and the winter was just setting in. All the summer long she had applied herself to her books with unwearied diligence, and now a long, quiet winter lay before her, then a summer of travel, and, after that, her first London "season." That was the programme which Lady Heathcote had marked out.

The convent was a picturesque old place, hidden away amid the green hills, and Grace found the days very peaceful and happy, and the companionship of the saintly nuns and pious sisters very soothing and pleasant.

Letters came to her occasionally from Lady Heathcote and her friends, who were sitting hither and thither, like a flock of restless birds—now in Paris, then under the shadow of the Alps, and anon reveling amid the gaieties of the German baths; letters full of gay gossip, and sparkling wit, and entertaining descriptions.

Her cousin, Julie Delmar, had married the marquis in great splendour, and had gone abroad for a twelve-months' stay; and Maud was putting forth her most potent arts to win the young Duke of Connaught.

"And she is so very pretty, and so clever, that she'll be sure to succeed," wrote Lady Heathcote; "and when you come home, my love, we'll have a double wedding. That reminds me that Lord Remington is absolutely dying for leave to run down and see you. Shall I send him?"

The self-same mail brought a little way-worn package from Her Majesty's good ship the "Triton." Father Anselm delivered the letters with his own hands, and kindly gave her permission to retire to her own room while she read them.

This Father Anselm was a new-comer at the convent. He had been transferred from some old monastery in Switzerland, and he belonged to the Cistercian or St. Bernard order, and wore the garb of a monk, and a peculiar kind of cowl or mask that half concealed his face, revealing only his long beard and sharp gray eyes.

He had won great favour, being a man of great piety and masterly intellect, and he was at once appointed to a professor's chair in the scholastic department.

On that wintry afternoon, when Lady Grace sat poring over her lessons, this self-same worthy father brought her the package from the "Triton."

It was the second letter she had received from Carlos since they parted at Heathcote, and her first one was somewhat brief and unsatisfactory.

Her hand shook, and her heart throbbled fiercely as she received this second letter, for whose coming she had hoped and waited so long.

Father Anselm smiled gravely as he put it in her hand.

"Ay, little one," he said, kindly, "I'm afraid these foreign letters are making mischief; but run up to your room and read them."

Grace obeyed with alacrity, and, looking her door, essayed to break the seals; but her trembling fingers refused to perform the task. She was in a thrill of happy excitement from head to foot.

At last she succeeded in opening it, and ran her eyes down the first page; but the very first words seemed to startle her, and as she read a deadly pallor overspread her face; the open letter fluttered from her nerveless hand, and she sank down to the floor with a cry of inexpressible agony.

The bell for recitation rang, but she did not heed it, and an hour or so later, when Father Anselm stole up and rapped softly at her door, he was answered only by the suppressed sound of her passionate weeping.

He went his way and left her with her sorrow. "She'll live it down," he murmured, with a queer smile in his keen eyes; "she'll live it down. At her age grief is very short-lived."

The letter was from the commander of the "Triton," not from Carlos himself, and its purport was to inform Lady Grace, and through her all other friends and relatives, that Carlos Brignoli was dead. He had contracted a sudden fever and died after an illness of only a few days.

This was the end of her dream. It had been so bright, so passionate, so blissfully sweet. And this was the end. Her head ached with a sharp, ceaseless

pain, and the only hope the future held out was that of early death.

Father Anselm noticed her white, miserable face the instant she appeared on the following morning, and hastened to her side.

"My child," he said, kindly passing his hand over her bright hair, "I'm afraid your letters brought you bad news?"

Grace burst into tears.

"They told me of the death of the only friend I had in the wide world!" she sobbed.

The monk led her into a retired corner, and, sitting down beside her, with kindly words and delicate sympathy drew the whole story from her—the story of her father's will, which commanded her to marry the Earl of Remington, and of her own passionate love.

"But now," she added, bitterly, "it is all over; since he is gone it matters little what I do; but I pray Heaven I may die!"

"You are young, my child, and death may not come for years," said Father Anselm. "You must learn to bear this sorrow, and to content yourself with such happiness as Heaven in its wisdom may see fit to grant you."

Poor Grace was utterly prostrated beneath the terrible weight of her grief. For weeks she was unable to pursue her studies, and both health and reason were threatened.

In all these dark days of agony Father Anselm was her constant companion, her tender and sympathizing friend, delicate as a woman in his attentions, sage as a philosopher in his words of consolation.

But their point and pathos were lost on Lady Grace, for the grief she suffered was the kind for which there is no cure.

A few weeks after this event Lady Heathcote came, accompanied by the young Earl of Remington, to pay Lady Grace a visit. They were having such a gay time they could not find it in their hearts to suffer her to mope out the winter all alone.

The earl was in high spirits, and looking his best, and her ladyship's renowned youth and beauty suggested a daily draught from the fabled elixir.

Grace received them quietly, with the icy indifference which characterized her manner. She seemed to have lost all earthly concern, not only in regard to others, but for her own welfare.

Her ladyship had not heard the news of her son's death, only through Grace; but the very day of her arrival a package came direct from India, containing letters from Colonel Henshawe for herself and for Grace, in which the intelligence was confirmed.

The colonel was then stationed at Droom, but he had just returned from Calcutta, where he had received despatches from the "Triton," informing him of the sad occurrence. He proffered his services, to secure for her ladyship whatever personal articles her poor boy might have left, and to ascertain the exact particulars of his death.

Lady Heathcote was overwhelmed with grief she may be sure, for we know her to be a most tender and motherly woman. She wept profusely, and talked by the hour of her dear boy, and of the hopes she had cherished of his future; and now they were all cut off by his untimely death.

Little Grace, who was truth itself, and too innocent to doubt others, believed in her beautiful mother's sorrow, and felt her heart warm towards her because of it; and during the visit to the convent the mother and daughter became more affectionate and confiding than they had ever been before.

"I shall be quite glad, my love," said her ladyship as they sat together the last night of her stay, "when your year of study is ended, and I can have you at home again. You are growing wiser and spiritless down in this ghostly old place. I've half a mind to take you back with me."

But Grace made a passionate protest.

"Very well then, have it your own way," continued Lady Heathcote. "I will only be for a few months at most. I shall have you home for our summer travel. Beatrice will marry Lord Glandore in May, and we shall have a large party for the Alps and Baden Baden. In the winter, I suppose," she added, reflectively, "you will obey your father's last behest, and marry Lord Remington. How have you and his lordship settled it?"

Grace looked up with a startled glance, her sweet, blue eyes, that had grown so indescribably holy and tender in her recent suffering, wearing the look of a helpless, frightened child.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, bursting into a passion of tears, "oh, dearest mamma, pity me, and pray Heaven I may die! Oh, I can't marry Lord Remington. I cannot—it would be sin, though my father's will commands it. I never can become his wife, or any other living man's, because—because I loved your son, who lies buried beneath the sea."

I think it is more justice to say that for one brief moment, wicked and cruel as she was, Lady Heathcote was affected.

The girl's angelic face, and the touching pathos of her voice, moved her stony heart with a sudden thrill of pity. She put out her hand and caressed her golden hair.

"Well," she said, "I am sorry for you, but I can't see what you will do—Lord Remington will never listen to a denial."

The kind, considerate reply inspired Grace with courage.

"I have been thinking of something," she continued, "ever since I heard of his death. Mamma, I've made up my mind to enter a convent."

Lady Heathcote gave a violent start.

"I mean," Grace went on, "to become a nun, to leave the world for ever—then I shall escape all this misery, and, dear mamma, I shall give all my fortune to you, and you must take care of the old Abbey, and have everything done just as you think dear papa would have desired."

Lady Heathcote sat like a statue, not daring to utter a word in reply; lest she should betray the delight she felt. Her brain was in a whirl, and her heart throbbled fiercely.

At last she calmed her voice by a great effort, and suppressed the exultation that sparkled in her eyes.

"My child," she said, taking the girl's hand, "this is a very serious thing; who has advised you to this step?"

"No one has advised me. Father Anselm spoke of it once or twice, I think, but it came to me when I was seeking some way of escape from earthly troubles. Please do not oppose me, dearest mamma, for my mind is fully made up, and I shall tell Lord Remington before he goes back to London. It is my only hope for happiness."

Lady Heathcote said much more; she talked to Grace with a mother's tenderness, opposing her intention, and setting before her all the splendours and delights she was giving up.

But Grace was inexorable in her determination; and in a transport of joy her ladyship left her.

All she coveted was coming into her possession, and without an effort on her part to obtain it. She would be mistress of Heathcote, and there would be no dark deeds, no pallid spectres to haunt her. Surely, surely, if ever fate worked for mortal being it was at work for her.

Once in a convent this girl would be as dead to the world as if she were in her grave, and her ladyship would be spared the hardest task she had ever contemplated.

Could it be real? Would the girl change her mind? In fear of such a thing Lady Heathcote determined to see this Father Anselm, and if possible enlist him in her cause.

Father Anselm obeyed the summons of her ladyship with alacrity. He received her in the convent library, and they sat down face to face, preparatory to a grave conference.

The monk was a middle-aged man, finely formed, and highly intellectual, and his eyes, as they flashed out from under his sombre cowl, gave evidence of keen penetration and an iron will.

Lady Heathcote felt just the least bit agitated, sitting there in front of him, and began to finger the tassels on her velvet travelling cloak.

The monk watched her for the space of a minute with a peculiar smile in his eyes, then he broke the silence.

"I believe, madam," he began, in a voice of uncommon depth and power, "that you wish to see me in regard to your daughter, Lady Grace. Be good enough to let me know in what way I can serve either yourself or her ladyship."

Lady Heathcote bowed, and took courage.

"My daughter has been telling me," she ventured, struggling hard to keep her voice steady, "that she thinks of entering a convent—in other words, of taking the veil."

Father Anselm bowed in his turn, and her ladyship went on:

"Under almost any other circumstances I should oppose this intention with all my might, because Lady Grace is young, and wealthy, and surrounded by everything needed to render her happy; but unfortunately, in the midst of all, she is miserable. As you already know, perhaps, her father's will obliges her to marry Lord Remington, and poor Grace never did, and never will, I believe, love any one but my poor boy, who died a few weeks ago at sea. She is very wretched, being conscientious about her dead father's will; yet she would be a thousand-fold more wretched if she married Lord Remington. He is rather a wild young man, and very hot-tempered; and I feel sure a union between them would result in nothing but misery. Convinced of all this, I hesitate to oppose the child in her determination to take the veil, and I have come to you for advice."

Father Anselm had listened with the utmost attention, and at this point he arose.

"My dear madam," he replied, "there is no advice needed—the child's proper course is marked out clearly enough. Let me entreat you, since she has made up her mind, not to oppose and distress her."

Lady Heathcote raised her handkerchief to her eyes. She wept silently for a few moments, then she said:

"Well, I suppose it must be so; and now let me beg of you, sir, if my dear child should persist in her determination, to make the way as pleasant for her as you can. I want her to be happy. I am forced to leave her now, but you are her spiritual teacher—I beg of you to comfort and encourage her, and, if she will enter a convent, make her do so cheerfully."

The noon train bore her back to London, with the Earl of Remington at her side, very drunk, and half insane with rage at the loss of the Heathcote heritage.

Lady Grace, having fully decided in regard to her future, experienced a sense of rest and security that was as near akin to happiness as any emotion possibly could be. Her last stormy interview with the man her father had chosen for her husband, and the bearer of the proud old Heathcote name, had shocked her inexpressibly; he was coarse, brutal, and unmanly to the last degree, and he had taken a fearful oath to have revenge on her for cheating him out of the heritage—his lawful right as he expressed it. The bare remembrance of this interview made the poor girl shiver with terror.

"Mark me!" he raved, as they parted, his hot breath scorching her cheek, and his livid green eyes glaring upon her, "this is not the last of it. Our day of reckoning will come yet! and it shall be your turn to sue then—yes, I'll make you beg on your knees for the privilege of becoming my wife."

The terrible words rang in Grace's ears for hours after, and, before the day closed, she sought Father Anselm, and entreated him to arrange all the necessary formalities, and allow her to enter a convent as soon as possible. In compliance with her request, Father Anselm set himself about making the requisite arrangements.

CHAPTER XIII.

Still from the fount of Joy's delicious springs
Some bitter o'er the flowers its bubbling venom
Rings.

MEANWHILE the winter settled down dark and stormy over busy London; but, despite the dank fogs and dripping rains and general out-door gloom, society was in a perfect whirl.

There never had been a gayer season or a more brilliant one.

Lady Heathcote's residence was one of the very grandest in the most aristocratic and fashionable quarter. Its appointments were all perfect, everything in the way of magnificence and art and beauty that wealth could procure adorned its spacious halls, and the most select of the aristocracy filled them.

But her ladyship was in double mourning, and wore that interesting expression of sadness that made her dark face more bewitching, and her wondrous eyes even more lovely than when they flashed with joy.

As we already know, she had lost her son, and, to use her own pathetic words, her bereavement would be double, for she was about to lose her daughter.

London circles were absolutely electrified by the announcement that Lady Grace Heathcote, heiress of Heathcote Abbey, and the very last of her race, was soon to take the black veil of the Convent of the Sacred Heart.

Such a marvel was unprecedented. The affair was discussed in every drawing-room in the West End, and over every country tea-table between Heathcote Abbey and London.

What could the girl mean? At last, how or through whom no living soul could tell, the story of her ill-fated love leaked out, then the thing grew to be a romance.

Lady Heathcote was making a very comfortable season despite her double bereavement. She held nominal possession of the Heathcote heritage, and was in regular receipt of letters from Colonel Ludovic Hershaw, who talked strongly of throwing up his commission and returning to England for life.

The colonel was growing weary of his life in India, migrating between Droom and Humdrampore, and, once in a while, Calcutta; with nothing to live for but bitter ale in the day and card-playing at night.

Colonel Hershaw was becoming very sensible as he grew older. He wrote to her ladyship in a most dutiful and affectionate manner, and when she apprized him of Lady Grace's determination to take the veil he received the intelligence in quite a matter-of-fact manner, and expressed his opinion that it was about the most advisable step she could take, considering the circumstances that surrounded her.

Lady Heathcote was very much gratified to be sure, and sat herself down in peace to enjoy the fruits

of her labours. The reward of all her arduous plotting seemed almost within her grasp. In a short time the one purpose of her life would be accomplished, then she would shut the doors of the past and look them fast and close, and never even dream again of the pale spectres they imprisoned. All this would surely be, for was not Fate her friend?

There was but one single bitter drop in the sparkling cup that soon would touch her lips, and that was the loss of the old keeper-ring, the opal "Mystic Eye." She had vowed that it should be her wedding-ring, and her desire to possess it grew into a mania. Day and night it seemed to haunt her. Where in all the wide world could be this key that alone would unlock the treasure-trove that held the hidden Heathcote treasures?

Where was Margaret Seaton—alive or dead? This question disturbed my lady's supreme content and brought the pallor of fear to her dusky face. She would have given a bounteous portion from her immense wealth for certain proof of this woman's death.

The London season waxed gayer and brighter, and by degrees the semblance of sorrow for the death of the young midshipman which had been assumed in Lady Heathcote's mansion was put off, and her drawing-rooms blazed out in a splendour that was absolutely dazzling.

One murky evening towards the close of January the Lady Beatrice gave a large party. Her nuptials with Lord Glandore had been announced to take place in May, and the beautiful Italian, though she owned no dowry, save her father's old villa, occupied no insignificant position in the galaxy of London beauty. Her lovers were named legion, and once enthralled she held them secure by the brilliancy of her charms and the sparkle and vivacity of her wit.

Lord Glandore was an exceedingly sensible and even-tempered person; and, although his lovely betrothed was an acknowledged belle and a born coquette, he did not often grow jealous; so Lady Beatrice was spared considerable bother and annoyance in her triumphs.

In the front rank of her admirers—indeed we may say the foremost of all her admirers, most in earnest, most passionate, most madly in love—was the young Earl of Remington.

From their first meeting, as we know, he had conceived a great admiration for the Italian princess, and, after the final separation between Lady Grace and himself, when he had given up all hope of the Heathcote heritage, he abandoned himself to the ardour of his passion.

He followed the countess like her shadow, his devotion was unrelenting, and he offered for her acceptance the most expensive and unique gifts; he quarrelled with her lovers, and was eager to fight a duel with her betrothed husband.

Lady Heathcote remonstrated, and even grew angry, and threatened; but for once she had an element in hand that was beyond her control.

She might as well have wasted her words on a whirlwind as to attempt to curb the fiery will of the lord of Remington; and Lady Beatrice was careless and volatile, and fond of admiration to the last degree; and in the midst of these auspicious party came off.

It was one of the grandest of London's grand affairs, and attended by the very best of London society.

The marquis and his lovely bride, Julie Delmar, were there—the latter resplendent in azure silk and old point lace and gleaming diamonds; so also were heavy, stolid, good-natured St. Denys Delmar and his beautiful daughter, Maud, and her chosen knight, the young Duke of Connaught.

But St. Denys was not in his wonted spirits, the caprice of his ward, Lady Grace, in persisting to take the veil had troubled him exceedingly. He had taken it upon himself to pay her a visit, but all his expostulations and persuasions had been of no avail.

The young heiress of Heathcote had been as firm as adamant, and good St. Denys, who held his dead friend's wishes very sacred, had returned home sorely troubled.

Sir Ruthven Remington was another who deeply deplored this strange freak on the part of Lady Grace, for he had set his heart on the union between her and his son, fondly trusting that the alliance would reclaim and save him.

But Lady Grace's unalterable determination to take the veil at once put an end to all the plans and plots that her dead father and Sir Ruthven had concocted, and, bitterly disappointed and utterly hopeless of his son, the unhappy father went back to the seclusion of the "Hermitage," half convinced that his wife was right when, guided by the present instincts of motherhood, she turned her back, as it seemed, upon the babe of her bosom.

Meanwhile the young lord of Remington Court went from bad to worse. He drank, and gambled, and indulged in grosser vices, and, before the season

was over, he began to look prematurely worn and aged.

But in his devotion to Lady Beatrice he never wavered, his passion seemed to grow more ardent with every day that passed. Rumour whispered that brilliant Beatrice was not indifferent to his mad worship, although she was betrothed to one of England's proudest peers.

The ball had commenced, and the spacious music-room was filled with dancers when the young nobleman arrived. His face was flushed, and the smouldering fire in his eyes betokened some unusual excitement.

Lady Heathcote watched him covertly from the little ormolu card-table before which she was seated, with an anxious, yearning expression in her eyes.

He lounged about moodily, wholly unmindful of the beautiful creatures that surrounded him, and watching Beatrice with ill-concealed impatience as she floated down the long line of dancers.

She was dancing with Lord Glandore, her betrothed husband, and she wore his gift of diamonds, and never, perhaps, had she looked so wondrously brilliant before. Her robe was gold-coloured silk, trimmed with black, and she wore little tufts of yellow field daisies, set in buds of green leaves, amid the jewels that flashed on her white bosom, and amid the black braids of her hair.

She was one of a thousand for beauty and regal bearing, but her imperial face was not that of a true and tender woman.

The inspiring strains of a gay waltz filled the lofty halls, and she floated hither and thither with matchless grace; but her gleaming, restless eyes turned over and anon towards the distant window where the lord of Remington stood, clenching his teeth hard to keep down his impatience.

Lady Heathcote watched the pair, a look of intense agony and horror deepening in her eyes. She forgot the game she was playing, she failed to respond to the polite remarks of her companion, and all at once she arose and hurried from the room.

"Oh, Heaven!" she cried, clasping her hands in agony, when she was alone, "why didn't I think of it before? Idiot! blind, trusting idiot that I have been! Now what am I to do? How shall I undo this mischief? I dare not tell them the appalling truth! Merciful Heavens! it is horrible! But this love between them must end! I must tell Beatrice—I must trust the terrible secret with her!"

Meanwhile Beatrice, having ended her waltz, was claimed on the instant by Lord Remington. She consulted her tablets to see about her engagements, but he caught them from her hand in fierce impatience, and bore her off to the conservatory, followed by Lord Glandore's shocked and wondering gaze.

"Now," he panted as he seated her amid the fragrant bloom and placed himself beside her, "we are alone at last! I thought that waltz would never end, and I could have brained Glandore on the spot. Beatrice, are you ready?"

She looked up smiling, but her sparkling face paled a trifle beneath his burning glance.

"My carriage is at the back entrance," he continued, "and here's your travelling cloak—come!"

"Lord Remington," faltered Beatrice, glancing at the gleaming Glandore diamonds on her bosom as she spoke, "we must not be rash."

"There's no rashness about it!" he cried, excitedly; then, following her glance, he made a clutch at the diamonds, exclaiming as he tore them off and cast them at her feet, "You are mine now, and I will give you gems that a queen might covet. Come, Beatrice, you remember your promise?"

"Yes; but, Lord Remington, we must not be too hasty," she remonstrated, half frightened at his impetuous passion.

"What have we to fear?" he thundered; "I've a fortune in my own right that no one can touch—I say what have we to fear? Why can't we be as rash and hasty as we like? I tell you I won't be put off, not for an instant. This hour you shall choose between Glandore and myself!"

"I have chosen," she replied, quietly.

"Then come! There's not a moment to lose; we must catch the next train, and you shall be my wife before another sunset!"

The girl rose to her feet, her cheeks aflame, all her wild blood at fever heat.

This mad young desperado's daring passion had flattered and won her.

"Yes," she said, "I will come!"

In less than an hour they were off, flying like the wind, leaving busy London, with its myriads of dancing gaslights, far behind them in the wintry night.

(To be continued.)

KING VICTOR EMMANUEL, legal Sovereign of Rome, seems determined to become one of its largest landed proprietors. Some time ago he purchased an

immense estate, the property of the Duke Grazioli. Now he has bought other property in the same district—a large estate near Albano, belonging to the Prince Torlonia—a large villa and grounds near the Barberini Palace; and is treating for other acquisitions.

The Spanish and Portuguese railway companies have made arrangements with each other for establishing a system of circular tours through Spain and Portugal at reduced fares.

THE LATE SIR R. MURCHISON'S VASE.—The celebrated vase of Siberian aventurine, given by the Emperor Nicholas the First of Russia to the late Sir Roderick I. Murchison, as "the explorer of the geology of Russia," and bequeathed by him to the Museum of Practical Geology, is now in position in that establishment. This vase is four feet high and six feet in circumference, and stands on a pedestal of polished gray porphyry.

PRESENTS FROM THE PRINCE OF WALES.—The Prince of Wales has signified his appreciation of the special services at Sandringham of Messrs. Bradford and Cooper, of the special telegraphic staff of the Post Office, by presenting to each, with his own hand, a valuable token of his approval. The present in the case of Mr. Bradford consists of an elegant set of silver-gilt salt-cellars and spoons, enclosed in a morocco case, and in that of Mr. Cooper of a handsome shell-pattern gold pin, set with a large and valuable black pearl.

LONGEVITY.—The Irish Registrar-General, in his report on the third quarter of the year 1871, states that six deaths were registered as being those of centenarians. The Registrar of Cookstown district reports the death of a woman aged 102, and a man aged 106, and says:—"I have made careful inquiry respecting these two ages, and have no reason to think the ages are exaggerated; both are remembered as 'old people' by individuals long past their climacteric." In the Derroock district, Ballymoney Union, the Registrar reports "a death at the advanced age of 105 years authenticated."

A GENEROUS OFFER.—Mr. Franklyn, the agent of the Cunard Company in New York, has offered to carry the Wednesday mail from New York to Queenstown absolutely free, on the sole condition that the American Post Office will bring the bags to the steamer's wharf. The Postmaster-General would be enabled, by this bold and patriotic offer, to reduce the postage on letters from America to England to four cents. The Cunard Company show that the carriage of the mails by their boats last year would have avoided serious delays, and they make their splendid offer in the interests of the mercantile community.

TO FLY OR NOT TO FLY.—I wonder if those who talk so much about flying machines know that birds support the entire weight of their bodies in the air by the power of their pectoral muscles acting upon their wings. They fly in the air as men swim in the water, except that men are supported by the water, and their pectoral muscles are only used as propellers. For a man to be able to fly the first requisite is to be able to support the entire weight of the body by the extended arms. The experiment can easily be tried. Let him make parallel bars, such as are used in a gymnasium, so far apart that, in standing between them, each will come under the elbow, with extended arms. Now take away all other support, and if he can sustain the weight of the body in that position, for an indefinite time, perhaps he may have strength enough to sustain his body on wings—if not, not!—D. N.

THE LATE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S FAVOURITE GROOM.—John Mears, the favourite groom of the great Duke of Wellington, died a few days ago at his residence in Basingstoke, aged 76. After a service of nearly 40 years with the late Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington, and up to the time of the illustrious duke's death in 1852, Mears was the groom who attended him on all occasions in public and private. His portrait is preserved in the well-known picture of "The Last Return from Duty," where he is represented riding immediately behind his master. He will also be well remembered by the public generally as having been the groom who led the duke's horse, caparisoned in "trappings of woe," on the occasion of the public funeral of his grace in St. Paul's Cathedral—the most touching feature in the whole procession. On the death of his father the present duke, with great consideration for past services, pensioned Mears liberally, as, in fact, his grace did the whole of his father's old servants.

KINDROCHET CASTLE.—The interesting ruins of this old castle, with which many remarkable associations are connected, and also about which cling a large amount of extraordinary and superstitious tales, stand near the centre of the village, on the Cluny bank, and at present there is a goodly amount of gossip current that the authorities are to set about excavating and opening up to the light some of its hoary chambers and underground vaults. Ac-

cording to the earliest records it was built in 1054, and was used by Malcolm Canmore and subsequent kings of Scotland as a royal hunting-seat. Tradition says that it was destroyed—literally battered down, and its tenants buried in the ruins—some time subsequent to the death of King Robert II. Some fugitive midnight explorers many years ago, who were in the habit of descending by one of the huge chimney vents, unearthed some curiosities, and among others, we believe, a charter written on parchment granted from Kindrochet Castle by the latter monarch. We hope the projected exploration will soon be proceeded with.

SCIENCE.

THE "Woolwich infant" will not burst; her digestive powers for powder are as good as when she was born. Nine of these guns will be ready by the 31st of March, the end of the financial year, and four others are in progress.

THE GERMAN NAVY.—The German navy will in the next four years be increased by five large iron-clads, as the "Mets" and "Sedan," which have been ordered in England, are to be completed in two years. The ships are to have plating eight inches thick on the water line, and the turrets ten inches thick.

CURE FOR STAMMERING.—The editor of the *La Crosse Leader*, who has been an inveterate stammerer, says he cured himself by taking a sentence, pronouncing it by syllables, scanning it, keeping time with the finger, letting each syllable occupy the same time. First he pronounced the syllables slowly, then faster, keeping time with the words the same as with syllables, and in a short time he could read without stammering, and nearly as rapidly as persons usually read or talk. As no stammerer has found any difficulty in singing this rule is obvious.

FREEZING BY MECHANICAL ACTION.—M. Foselli has announced to the French Academy of Science that he has succeeded in producing an amount of cold just below the zero of the Fahrenheit scale by simple mechanical action creating rapid evaporation. He employs a wheel formed of a spiral tube, both ends of which are open, set vertically and half immersed in the fluid to be cooled, so that the latter passes constantly through the whole length of the tube, half of which is constantly above the liquid, and, being wet, gives rise to active evaporation and consequent refrigeration within it.

A NEW METHOD OF NICKEL PLATING.—Dr. Wolcott Gibbs has recently given a brief description of a new process for plating various metals with nickel without the use of a battery, which process was devised by Professor Stolba. Into the plating vessel—which may be of porcelain, though the author prefers copper—is placed a concentrated solution of zinc chloride, which is then diluted with from one to two volumes of water, and heated to boiling. (If any precipitate separates, it is to be redissolved by adding a few drops of hydrochloric acid.) As much powdered zinc as can be taken on the point of a knife is thrown in, by which the vessel becomes covered internally with a coating of zinc. The nickel salt—for which purpose either the chloride or sulphate may be used—is then added until the liquid is distinctly green; and the articles to be plated, previously thoroughly cleaned, are introduced, together with some zinc fragments. The boiling is continued for 15 minutes, when the coating of nickel is completed, and the process is finished. The articles are well washed with water and cleaned with chalk. If a thicker coating be desired, the operation may be repeated. Professor Stolba found that copper vessels thus plated were scarcely tarnished after several months' use in the laboratory.

A NAVIGABLE BALLOON.—An ascent was recently made by M. Dupuy de Lome, the celebrated French nautical engineer, from Vincennes, in a navigable balloon which he constructed during the siege of Paris. Thirteen other persons went up with him: eight men for working the screws. The calculated rate of motion in air perfectly calm was eight miles an hour. The wind was blowing from the south at the rate of 42 miles. M. Dupuy de Lome only expected a slight deviation from the direction of the wind, according to the composition of forces. The expected deviation was obtained several times during the journey, and the rate of the directing power was slightly superior to the calculation. The descent was most successfully effected, owing to the elongation of the balloon, which is elliptical, the great axis being three times the length of the smallest. Guide-ropes and grapnel were sent down from the car of the aerial ship, and two boys, who arrived on the spot, were strong enough to stop it. The balloon descended at Noyon, about 90 miles from Paris, in the direction of Brussels. The weight of the car was 1,000 lb., of passengers and crew 2,200 lb., besides the screws and balloon. With such a weight it is possible to employ

a steam-engine. Every rotation of the balloon was radically stopped, and land observation was most easy and most successful. The rudder was a square sail, which acted most effectually. Many evolutions were executed during the journey, which lasted during something less than two hours.

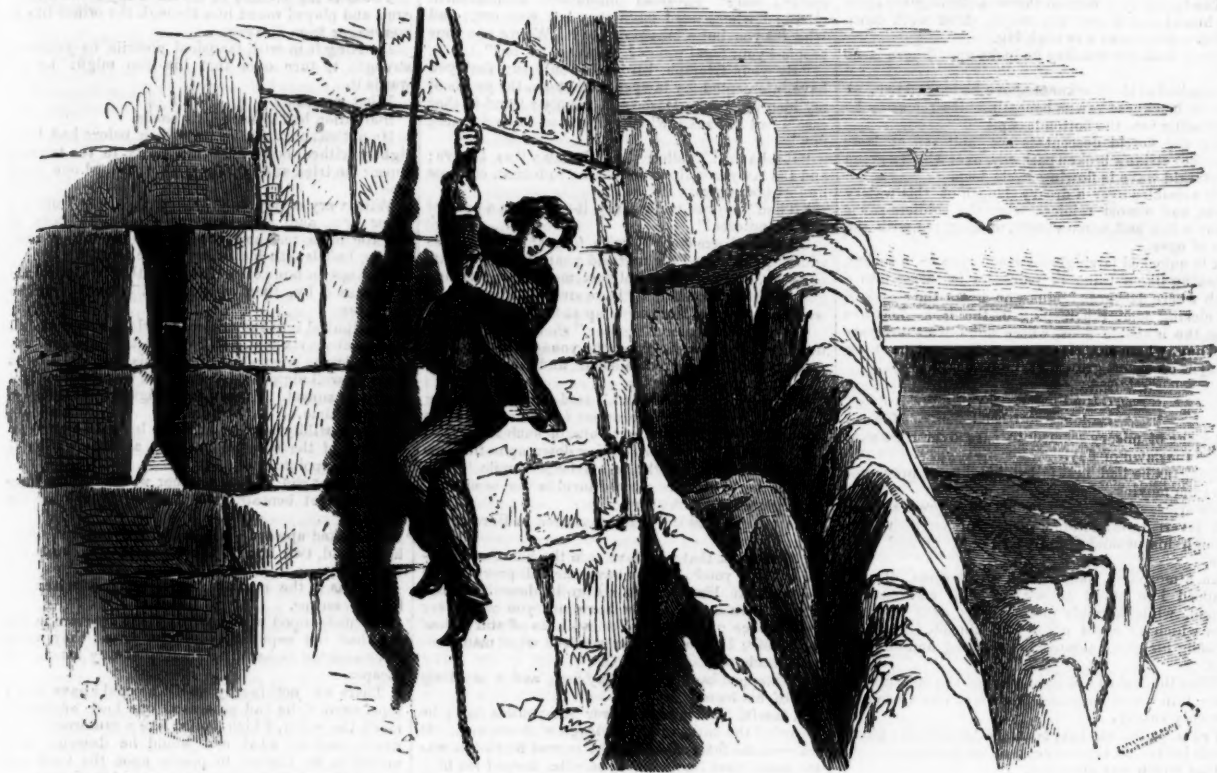
GUANO.—The anchors of ships moored in the vicinity of the Chincha Islands frequently bring up guano from the bottom of the ocean, which is rather contrary to the doctrine that these marvellous deposits are the excreta of birds. The recent researches of Dr. Habel go far to corroborate Professor Edward's view that guano is really a stratified deposit. When the portions of guano which are insoluble in acids are examined they are found to consist entirely of skeletons of *Diatomacea*, *Polycystina*, and sponges, all of which are invariably of marine origin, and sometimes identical with those still living in the adjacent ocean. These forms are also found in patches exactly as they occur in nature. From these and other facts, recently obtained by chemical and microscopical investigation, there appears to be but little doubt that guano is an accumulation of the bodies of animals and plants, which, either by heat, by chemical action, or both combined, has had its organic matter converted into bitumen, while the mineral constituents have been preserved in those beautiful forms which make up the infusorial strata in various parts of the world.

ICE MANUFACTURE IN INDIA.—During the short winter, which ranges from the end of November to the middle of February, the natives are enabled to procure a supply of ice by a skilful application of the principle of evaporation. The process of manufacture is to expose the water at night, in shallow earthenware pans, which are arranged in regular order, close to each other, to the number of 5,000 or 6,000. The ice begins to appear a little before midnight, and as soon as a slight film of ice is formed the contents of several pans are mixed together, and the freezing liquid sprinkled over others. By sunrise about an eighth of an inch of ice will generally be found in each pan, except on very favourable nights, when the whole contents are sometimes frozen. This, however, is a very rare occurrence. The ice is then removed by women, who use a blunt semicircular knife, with which they scoop it out and throw it, together with any unfrozen water, into earthen vessels. When these vessels are full their contents are emptied in conical straining baskets placed over the large water jars from which the pans are filled, a supply of cool water thus being collected for the following night's operations. The drained ice is next deposited in wells.

MEASUREMENT OF THE VELOCITY OF CANNON BALLS.—A very ingenious instrument, known as Noble's Chronoscope, is used for measuring the velocity of shot during its transit through the gun. The tube of the gun is fitted inside at certain intervals with metal rings (to the number of six or eight), the outside margins of which are sharpened into knife edges. As a shot passes along the tube and through these rings, the edges of the latter are jammed down upon, and made to cut through, the ends of various insulated wires, one of which is placed under each ring. Each of these wires is connected with an electric battery, and, as one wire after another is cut through and the insulation removed, an electric current passes, and a number of electric sparks follow one after another, according to the number of rings and wires. The recording of signals is accomplished by means of a series of metal discs, one in connection with each, which are made to revolve at a certain known velocity. The surface of the discs is of polished silver, coated with lamplack. As soon as a wire is cut by the passage of a shot, a spark hops over to the recording disc, removing a little of the lamplack coating, and thus marking the place by leaving a bare minute spot of bright metal. From the relative position of the successive spots on the discs, and the known velocity at which they revolve, a simple calculation determines the velocity of the shot. A shot usually takes from one two-hundredth to one three-hundredth of a second to traverse the whole length of the bore of a large gun, its speed being somewhat slow when passing the rings, and increasing as it approaches the muzzle of the gun. From the extreme delicacy of the instrument, the calculation can be made with precision to a millionth part of a second, and the velocity determined with the greatest accuracy.

The *Swiss Times* notes the death, near Geneva, of M. Chevalier, who, it says, was 107 years old.

THE UNIVERSITY BOAT RACE.—It is stated that Messrs. Salter, the well-known boat-builders, will be entrusted with the building of a new craft for the Oxford crew (who will average nearly a stone lighter per man than last year), while Cambridge will patronize the well-known Clasper.



[HERWARD'S ESCAPE.]

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED.

CHAPTER XIV.

Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes:
That when I note another man like him
I may avoid him. *Shakespeare.*

COVERED with blood, pale and dust-stained, Hereward was forced into the vast central hall of the Tower, where sat the baron, pallid and ghost-like, shivering in the midst of his assembled household.

The hall was blazing with lights—perhaps to dispel the horror of the baron's mind, and the thick tapestry was drawn over the bolted windows to reassure him in his fright.

Once more Hereward was brought into the presence of his arch foe, bound like a malefactor this time, and without even his faithful Watt to bear him company.

His captor—he of the evil face—hastened across the stone floor with both hands outstretched to the Baron de Chastelard, whose craven countenance alternated between disappointment and triumph.

"Why did you not kill him?" screamed the baron, in his harsh, high voice. "He is the most dangerous fellow—the basest impostor that ever broke oath!"

The soldier stopped in the middle of his French embrace.

"Is he a prize then?" cried he. "I thought he must be, he fought so desperately—a regular jaguar that springs straight at the throat. Why should I murder the youth, my friend? Is it that you prefer scalps to captives? He was their leader, and they called him Kentigorne."

"Their leader!" shrieked the baron, with his byena laugh; "and a Kentigorne! Ha! ha! ha—h! Where are his proofs? Who knows him here? He's an arrant impostor!"

He glared with his reptile eyes upon Hereward until he shuddered.

"We shall give him a Kentigorne's reception," smiled the soldier, turning with half-admiring scorn to the hero.

"Where did you seize him?" cried the baron, in trembling, husky tones. "Come, La Mort, tell me how the villain met with the village people."

Captain La Mort gave a brief account of the arrest, while Hereward leaned wearily against the paneled wall near the door among his guards, and scrutinized him attentively.

He was about thirty, tall, athletic, and elegantly proportioned. His small head was covered with locks of blue-black hair, luxuriantly curling, and his countenance was a deep, clear brown. The vivid scarlet of his lips and flashing whiteness of his teeth, as well as the rich bloom on his cheeks, and the

bluish tint of his small pointed beard, imparted to his visage a positive brilliance of manly beauty which was however instantly destroyed in the most signal manner, and that solely by its expression.

There was a contraction in the pupil of that large eye, there was one continuous line of eyebrow across the forehead, there was a cold ferocity about the rich and sensuous mouth, there was in fine a demon's treachery written plainly on every feature.

Standing beside the chair of the wizened old man, Captain La Mort, in his tightly buttoned military coat, waving his fine hand, upon which blazed a great diamond, was a magnificent man.

In the course of the recital a door in the upper end of the hall opened, and Lucia de Chastelard, white as a wraith in the moonlight, glided in, with her maid supporting her faltering steps.

She turned her eyes upon the blood-stained face of Hereward, from whom she had parted not an hour ago, and uttered a piercing shriek. In her eyes was frenzy, her small hands wrung each other in a paroxysm of fear, and she stood behind her father's chair, as it were, transfixed with despair.

"How dare you intrude here, mademoiselle?" cried the baron. "Begone, I say, or I will lock you up!" and he rose from his chair and stretched out his long, claw-like hand to clutch her.

She broke away from her maid before the baron had reached her, and made one distracted bound to Hereward's side.

"Ah, have they shot you?" shrieked she, seeing the blood drip from his hair upon his haggard cheek, and she seized his hand, and, perceiving it bound to his side, stooped down with a burst of tears and kissed it. "My brave, kind deliverer!" she murmured, almost inarticulately, "this is what your generosity to me has brought you to. Father!" she exclaimed, turning with a threatening flash in her dark hazel eyes, "is this a meet return for such a service? Wounded, fettered, and—oh, Heavens!—insulted in your presence! Who has done this?"

She pointed at the clotting gore, and, blind with tears, snatched her dainty lace handkerchief from her girdle and wiped the blood away.

"Miss De Chastelard," said a singular voice, "I have had the misfortune to do that."

Starting so violently that the handkerchief fell from her hand, she gazed at Captain La Mort, whom she had not seen until then. Paler she could not be, but an expression of terror overspread her lovely face, and she hung her head as if in shame, while he, radiant as before, smiled upon her confusion with an eye which gleamed like steel.

"Woman, remove your mistress!" stormed the

baron. "She's foolish, La Mort; do not heed such tempers."

"How can I console mademoiselle for the loss of so pleasing a youth?" smiled La Mort, approaching her with an elegant air of gallantry.

"Sir, you mock my unhappiness," replied she, with dignity; "but to this gentleman I owe my life, and thankless indeed would I be ever to forget that."

"He will now be conducted to an apartment somewhat different to that with which he was accommodated before," said Chastelard, brutally.

Lucia gazed in horror from one to the other.

"Would you condemn him unheard?" exclaimed she.

"Dear Miss Chastelard, permit me to remove you from so uncongenial a scene," interposed Captain La Mort, catching her hands, and bending over her still with that treacherous smile.

At the same moment, obedient to a sign from the old man, two of the soldiers stepped forward, and laid their hands on Hereward.

Lucia, perceiving the action, snatched her hands from La Mort, and imperiously waved back the men.

"Father, I demand his liberty!" she cried. "You dare not sacrifice him thus!"

Baron de Chastelard trembled with anger and fear, for he well knew the invincible spirit of that gentle girl—the spirit of the Kentigornes which animated her.

"Captain, see that she is safely returned to her room," cried he, almost beside himself with affright at his own temerity.

The captain threw his arm round the lady's waist and drew her apart.

So lightly he lifted her, so delicately he pressed her to his side, one would say he but caressed her; but his arm was like iron, and his hand a vice.

She looked up with a curious mingling of timidity and wrath, but the gaze she encountered fascinated her; she was mute.

"Now, men," murmured the baron, growing yellow, and Hereward was hurried from the hall.

One yearning glance he cast upon Lucia to see her encircled by the arm of La Mort, gazing with horror-smitten eyes into his, and oblivious of that parting look.

As Hereward was dragged through the vaulted corridor he thought he heard a woman's shriek of anguish, and his heart bled within him, for he knew it was his Lucia's.

They led him from that wing into the central tower, and forced him to descend a cork-screw staircase—down, down into the bowels of the earth.

The lamps they carried threw a lurid glare upon the humid stairs and the rough stone wall, down which an slimy ooze was trickling.

Dizzy with the winding he looks up. There is no roof.

Appalled at the blackness above he looks down. A well of blackness yawns beneath. He seems to be descending into the bottomless pit.

But the horrid descent is accomplished at last; their feet strike a broken pathway, over which a green and turgid wave is flowing ankle deep.

He stumbles over a dreary length of this watery waste, and almost rejoices when the soldiers pause before a low and narrow door, turning red with the rust of ages.

It is unlocked jarringly—swings open on a socket, shrieking like a thing in pain—he is thrust into a tomb where darkness reigns—he hears the shriek of the closing door, the rasping of the lock—he sinks upon the invisible floor, where unknown things are crawling, where shapeless horrors lie—and he closes his eyes on chaos, growing faint as death.

CHAPTER XV.

Hail, horrors! hail! Milton.

An age of misery seemed to pass over Hereward before the dawn of day.

Lying as he had first fallen, his horror prevented him from moving.

His arms, still pinioned by his sides, grew swollen and feverish, intolerable thrills of anguish shot through his wounds, undressed and clotted with gore.

An atmosphere, laden with mysterious disgust, wrapped him about as with a chill and clammy shroud, while horrible insects crept over his face, from which he could not defend himself except by pressing his cheek against the yielding and slippery floor.

When the first ray of light pierced the measureless chaos into which he gazed it seemed like a beam of heavenly beauty.

Yet so pallid was that beam, so terrible the gloom which it divided, lance-like, that he shuddered anew at that which was disclosed.

He lay upon a floor which was fetid with vile vegetation; load-stools festered tumour-like upon the reeking grime which thickly covered the stone out of which this den had been hewn; strange, monstrous growths hung from the walls and fattened on the diseased air; black objects gilded in and out of green pools under these abortions; and here and there a yellowish leprous stream extended from the roughly chiselled roof to the floor, down which a filthy per-spiration was dripping.

The only window to this detestable place was an orifice, neither glazed nor guarded with bars, through which the light struggled as if through a tunnel.

Hereward attempted to rise and seek this outlet, but fell back again, well nigh swooning.

Pain and suffocation had already shaken his strength; he could easily imagine that this cell was destined to be his death chamber.

He lay there languishing in helpless agony for hours, wondering if his dear and tender Lucia knew the fate of her "brave chevalier," as she had called him.

She might know and contrive to visit his noisome dungeon, or she might be prevented or come too late.

Hours succeeded hours; the light from the orifice grew fiery red.

The youth began to doze, despite the crawling reptiles.

But at last a muffled sound aroused him; the door was unlocked, and the rays of a lantern fell upon his face.

His visitor was the Baron de Chastelard.

His small, cold eyes were gleaming with a coward's exultation; he laughed as he looked down at his captive.

"Ah, ha! ah, ha! Lord Hereward Kentigorne does not relish the hospitality of Baron de Chastelard," taunted he; "he thought to win the Tower, but only gets the dungeon!"

Hereward fixed his bloodshot eyes upon that craven face, but disdained to reply.

"You are going to die the death of a traitor," exulted the old man, in a voice which trembled with triumph; "and, instead of ruling over a band of people who would adore you as much as they abhor Baron de Chastelard, you are going to die in this tomb, without one friend to be the wiser."

"Do your worst," said the young man, proudly, "while I am at your mercy. But, remember, I shall not die unavenged."

"Ah!" sneered the baron; "who is to avenge you?"

"The men who loved and fought for Henry Kentigorne will not brook in silence the murder of his son."

"Think you they will believe you are Henry Kentigorne's son?"

gerne's son?" screamed Chastelard, with fiendish mirth; "whose word have they but your own, and who are you but a bragging boy? Where are your proofs—your legal proofs? Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"By your triumph, baron, I would say that you have intercepted my lawyer, and stolen the proofs of my identity," said Hereward, calmly; "and in that case I can but acknowledge that you have defeated me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the old man; "so I have; and the lawyer will never breathe to human ear how he lost his papers. Ha, ha!"

"Then to your teeth I say it—you are a coward and a murderer!"

Chastelard grew livid with fury at this fearless address, and seized the intrepid youth by the throat. His long, crooked fingers almost met in their savage gripe; he would assuredly have strangled poor Hereward had not La Mort come up at that moment.

"Don't kill him, monseigneur," shouted he, pulling the baron backward. "Let the young dog live."

Chastelard recovered himself and shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"You are right, La Mort," said he, "the young dog shall live. Life is so sweet in this cavern that it would be a pity to deprive him of such felicity."

Captain La Mort stood looking down upon the captive with a terrible light in his large pupils. Like the panther's, his eyes glowed lurid in the semi-dark as he glared upon his prey.

He stooped suddenly, and muttered in Hereward's ear:

"You think that you have won the heart of mademoiselle, do you? If you have she will prevail upon the baron to liberate you. I go to describe to her what I have seen. If you have not you will never see the face of mortal. You will die of starvation. *Adieu*; I will carry your reprieve when mademoiselle sends me."

He stepped back with a gay nod, and a mocking kiss of his hand.

A fearful change passed over the youth's face; he regarded the dark, smiling visage with anguish. It was not the fear of death that moved him so, it was the dread that Lucia would sacrifice herself for him. Chastelard, seeing that pale look, chuckled malevolently, and cast significant glances round the cell.

"It will take a good while," said he aside to La Mort; "the place is cool and there is plenty of water."

Hereward could not repress a shudder of horror—he knew it was his death the baron spoke of, speculating upon the duration of his sufferings.

"He has the strength of a young lion," responded La Mort, admiringly; "he won't succumb until he maddens."

They retreated to the door, gazing back upon him as if they relished the sight.

He raised his head—it was on his tongue to implore La Mort to let him die rather than wring his liberty from Lucia's generosity, but the shrieking door as it closed behind them drowned his voice.

It would never again open upon him in his life unless his Lucia were lost to him.

A bitter cry involuntarily escaped him, and his despair gave him momentary strength to sit up and to strain his bonds with superhuman power.

But, alas! he might as well have tried to rend apart the walls which entombed him.

He sank back blinded with blood from his bursting veins, and gasping for breath.

Then the deadly slumber which his enemies had disturbed began to steal over him again, and fitful dreams lifted him out of his living tomb, and waited him to that gorgeous land where his father had won his fame.

When Hereward awoke another spectral day had passed, and at first he thought a thousand vampires were sucking his veins, so weak, so faint was he.

It was the pangs of hunger.

Again he slept, and dreamed of lambent seas, all dashed by flickering sunbeams, and covered by a sky of blue enamel, where from a shore of pure white coral he floated luxuriously, and sported with the painted fish.

This dream too faded, and the youth awoke to a burning pain and misery of fretted wounds, and raging fever.

The hunger had departed, but a great thirst parched his tongue.

Three days thus crawled away, and the fever waned and rose upon the hapless prisoner, but no one came to save him.

Had Lucia de Chastelard found the sacrifice too great?

Terrible as were his sufferings—grievous the conviction that she had loved him less than he loved her—the generous youth could still rejoice that she at last would be free from the chains of La Mort.

Towards the evening of the third day a cool breeze came and played round him through the orifice like a messenger from Heaven.

Drinking it in with famished nostrils, he gathered strength to turn over that his face might be towards it.

What was this?

Starvation had loosened his bonds.

He noticed that his arms, which before had been tightly withered, now could turn easily in the twisted ropes; he tried still farther, and wrenched one hand free!

With a cry of joy he unwound the cords from his other arm, and, animated by a strength born of ecstatic hope, rose and staggered to the orifice, and, falling half-length into it, wept like a child.

Perhaps an hour elapsed before this hysterical attack passed by, then he gathered strength for the next step.

He climbed into the orifice, crawled along at full length about six feet, and reached the outer lip.

A delicious breeze played upon his face, and a burst of light well nigh blinded him. It was the rose-light of dying sunset. It had been night in his dungeon for some time.

With a wildly beating heart he looked down from the edge of the hole and uttered an exclamation of bitter disappointment.

He saw at the foot of a sheer wall of rock, some hundred feet beneath, the dashing waves of the ocean!

He looked upward—cliff upon cliff towered overhead—and, two hundred feet above, was built the Tower.

He was in the heart of the living rock without a hope of escape.

He understood well now why the aperture in the wall had not required glazing or bars; they would have assisted rather than frustrated any attempt to escape.

There was nothing by which he could have tied a rope, even if he had possessed one long enough to reach the water, which boiled like a cauldron underneath; and to what end would he descend these unless to be dashed to pieces upon the tooth-like points of rock that grinned from amid the foam?

For a time the half-delirious youth yielded himself to despair, and buried his face in his hands.

He lay motionless thus for many minutes—perhaps hours, for, lulled by the roar of the sea, cooled by the evening breeze, and exhausted by fever and starvation, he slept.

When he awoke a silver flare was in the air, a nightingale was singing, and a figure wrapped in white was standing where the raging waves had been!

CHAPTER XVI.

Her veil falls off—her faint hands clasp her knees, 'Tis she herself! 'tis Zolien he sees! Moore.

THAT silvery light was shed by the moon—that nightingale's song was sung by a human voice—that shrouded form was a woman's—and the tide, receding, had left a narrow strip of sand under the Tower cliff.

Amazed, confounded, he gazed and gazed again. Then he broke off a fragment of jagged rock and dropped it on the beach beside the woman.

The bird's song ceased, and she waved a light scarf.

Hereward leaned out, and wildly waved his hand—she saw the signal, and flew, like a bird, out of sight.

In a few minutes she reappeared, two men following her with an immense burden on their backs, which they threw down directly beneath the orifice.

The woman then took something from the pile, placed herself close to the cliff, and stretched her arms over her head.

Something whirled past Hereward, a little to the left.

After waiting long enough to be aware of her failure, the female repeated the performance, which was again unsuccessful.

Hereward tore off his short cloak, and, rolling it up compactly, held it out.

For the third time the woman drew her bow, and when Hereward examined the cloak which he had extended he found an arrow sticking in it.

Eagerly he snatched from its cleft a slip of paper, and read these words:

"Hereward, friends have come to save you. Wind up the thread!"

In astonishment he saw that a thread was attached to the arrow, and he began to pull up.

Length by length he gathered it into the aperture, until, at last, a knot came into his hands, and now he was handling a thin hempen cord.

Yard after yard he gathered in the cord until he came to a second knot, then a rope slid through his hands. Up he pulled it, slowly and more slowly,

until he came to the third knot, and grasped a stouter rope.

Patiently he hauled foot by foot, until something clanged on the face of the cliff—rose higher, yet higher, heavy as lead, until he seized an iron bar.

The exertion, slight as it was, had almost exhausted him, and he sank upon the coil of rope almost fainting.

A strange, tingling sensation extended from his left shoulder to his elbow; also a bright scarlet thread began to curve spirally down to his wrist, making a little pool upon the stone ledge.

His wound had opened afresh. But the lethargy into which he was slowly sinking received a check. A shrill cry, like that of the bird of Paradise as it darts upon its food, began to rivet his senses:

"Voike, voike, voike, voike!" and with it the mournful grinding of the sea upon the rocks.

The female was warning him to make haste.

He raised himself, called back his strength, and began to haul in a cable, stout and strong.

In a few minutes it resisted his efforts. He looked down and saw one of the men holding the end of the cable, while the other was dancing madly on the beach.

The woman was kneeling, with her hands clasped, and her forehead among the sea-shells.

There was no pile lying there now; he had a sufficient quantity of the rope which had been provided for his escape.

He crawled backward through the tunnel, dragging the bar of iron with him, and he placed it across the inner opening of the aperture.

The cable was tied in the middle of the bar, and held it in its place that it could not slip. He entered the tunnel again feet foremost, and crawled backwards to the mouth of it. The cable was between his hands.

He essayed to let himself slip from the aperture; but paused, and struggled back in horror. He had seen the blood pouring over his hands.

How could he trust to his strength and nerve in this terrible descent? After three days' starvation—after such loss of blood as is caused by a deep gunshot wound in the shoulder, not to speak of a severe contusion in the head—after the horrors that had well nigh crazed him—it would be to commit deliberate suicide!

Hope forsook the young man; he leaned his pale cheek against the wall, and tears coursed down it.

But again the cry of a bird was heard, the plaintive cooing which seemed to beseech him to have courage.

He rallied all his nerve, pulled the cable to see that it was fast, and let himself drop from the orifice.

Terribly yawning the gulf of nothingness beneath him, and the cable clung to the wall, and gave him scarcely one inch between it and the stone to grasp it by.

But it was double, and knotted thickly, so that he could gain a foothold, and at first he slid steadily lower, clear of eye and quick to calculate the proper distances.

Inch by inch a little more boldly—down—down—down.

A chance swirl of the rope, a convulsive grasping, and a knot had been missed.

Faster and faster, the rope swinging out from the cliff, which here slanted in, the footholds lost, his hands clutching wildly at the double rope, the knots flying past—more swiftly still.

He looked down dizzily; he seemed no nearer to the shore yet.

Down, down, while the cable swung, and swayed, and rasped the flesh from his hands—down, down, while the knots flew past, almost jerking him off the rope—down, down, while a tumult filled his ears, and sparks shot up before his eyes—down, down, while an age of horror, of retrospection, of resignation, held his spirit breathless—an ominous rattling above—a spinning through chaos, and the end came—a shock.

The iron bar, obedient to the action of the swaying cable, had worked aside from its position, and had shot end-first through the orifice upon the head of the devoted fugitive when about fifteen feet from the ground.

Hereward became cognizant of human events again to find himself in a woman's arms, while a shaggy head was bent upon his breast, and a man sobbed over him.

"Wait," languidly breathed Hereward.

The shaggy head bobbed up at that, and the moonlight fell on two glistening furrows, lost in a scrubby beard, and on an ecstatic grin.

At Hereward's feet stood a tall old man with copper-coloured face, small black eyes, and long, loose black hair.

His hands were folded before him humbly, his dark robe was confined round the waist by a bright scarf, an embroidered scarlet cap was on his head.

Wonder and incredulity were painted upon Hereward's features as he saw this person; he turned his face and looked at the female upon whose bosom he leaned.

Two melting dark eyes, long-lashed and steeped in passion, a rich, bronzy cheek, a splendid regularity of features, a mass of dark hair falling low upon a white-draped bust.

"Badoura," murmured the youth, trying to smile.

Then a ghastly shadow crept over his face, and again he fainted.

"Oh, master! oh, master!" cried Watt Slygreen; "he's gone off again, he has. It's no use, he's done for now—oh, murder!"

And he cast his long arms round the youth's body with a howl of consternation.

"Bring water, Seyd," said the girl, in a strange tongue, to the old man, while she smoothed back the hair which lay clotted thick with blood upon Hereward's temples.

This young girl was beautiful as a statue in palest bronze on which the sun is shining, and her strange Eastern dress became her beauty well.

Her straight black hair was lifted off her brow by a fillet of white, and a jewel, rudely cut, blazed like a star upon the parting.

Her loose white upper dress displayed her soft, dark throat, which was encircled by heavy necklaces of amber, emerald, and gold.

A crimson scarf loosely confined her waist, and her flowing garments descended to her elegant ankles, which were decorated by massive bands of gold; her small feet were shod with sandals, her arms laden with many bracelets, which flashed with a thousand prismatic rays as the moonbeams caught them.

Such was the tropical creature—a Hindoo maid—who had essayed to rescue Hereward.

While Seyd brought a sea-shell filled with fresh water, which trickled through a seam in the rock a short distance from them, Slygreen watched the girl with a sort of stupefied grief as she staunch the flowing blood from the youth's shoulder, and felt with her small fingers for the ball.

In a few seconds she had discovered it, and worked it to the surface, heedless of the convulsive shudders of the unconscious patient, though her tiny teeth were set together and large tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

Thus she bathed his death-like face and lacerated hands with the water which her servant brought, and was just pouring a little into the parched mouth, when Watt bounded to his feet.

"By the ten arms of Doorgah, we're caught!" exclaimed he, pointing along the shore.

Not three hundred feet distant a string of bright uniforms were dropping into view from round a point.

With a wild gasp, the Hindoo maid pointed to her own mantle, which lay on the sand, and muttered, in Hindostanee:

"Spread it for the sahib."

Watt seized his master in his long arms, and placed him in the large garment just as Seyd had stretched it out.

Then they gathered it by the corners, and, carefully raising it, began running swiftly along the wall with long, swinging strides.

The maid, her white garments fluttering, flew on before them, and melted from their sight like a mirage lifted in air.

(To be continued.)

MEDICAL BARONETS.—The following is a list of practising physicians and surgeons who were created baronets as a professional reward.—Edward Graves, M.D., 1645 [There is some doubt whether Sir Edward Graves was ever legally created a baronet; but Dr. Munk, a great authority, claims him as the first medical baronet.—*Vide Roll of College of Physicians*, vol. 1, p. 60.]; Hans Sloane, M.D., 1716; Thomas Molyneux, M.D., 1730; Edward Hulse, M.D., 1738; Edward Wilnot, M.D., 1759; William Duncan, M.D., 1764; Edward Barry, M.D., 1775; John Pringle, M.D., 1766; Clifton Winttingham, M.D., 1776; George Baker, M.D., 1776; Cesar Hawkins, 1778; Lucas Pepys, M.D., 1786; Walter Farquhar, M.D., 1796; John Hayes, M.D., 1797; Francis Milman, M.D., 1800; Henry Halford, M.D., 1809; Gilbert Blane, M.D., 1812; William Knighton, M.D., 1813; Everard Home, 1813; James Wyllie, M.D., 1818; Wathen Waller, 1814; David Dundas, 1816; Matthew Tierney, M.D., 1818; Astley Cooper, 1821; Patrick Macgregor, 1828; James Macgrigor, 1831; Charles Clarke, M.D., 1831; William Russell, M.D., 1832; Stephen Hammick, 1834; Benjamin Brodie, 1834; James Clark, M.D., 1837; Henry Marsh, M.D., 1839; Philip Crampton, 1839; Henry Holland, M.D., 1853; Charles Locock, M.D., 1857; Thomas Watson, M.D., 1866; William Ferguson, 1866; James Simpson, M.D., 1866; Dominic Corrigan, M.D., 1866; William Lawrence, 1867; William Jenner, M.D., 1868; James

Paget, 1871; Robert Christison, M.D., 1871; William Gull, M.D., 1872, the total being 81 physicians and 13 surgeons. Sir A. Douglas, Sir A. Bannerman, Sir Henry Northcote, Sir George Hampson, Sir James Stonehouse, Sir William Dundas, Sir Richard Croft, and Sir G. Duncan Gibb all succeeded to family baronetcies while practising medicine. Sir George Staunton, Sir Robert Wigram, Sir J. Hutton Cooper, Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth, and Sir Charles Nicholson practised medicine for a time, but were created baronets for services unconnected with the medical profession.

A DARING GAME;

OR,
NEVA'S THREE LOVERS.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Craven Black was successfully pursuing his machinations to destroy the happiness of two young lives Lady Wynde had been active in carrying out her part in the infamous plot against Neva. The little packet of forged letters which had cost Lady Wynde's fellow-conspirator a night of toil, and had been sent to Hawkhurst by a special messenger, had been safely delivered into the hands of Mrs. Artress, who had been waiting at the lodge gate to receive it.

It had so happened that not even the lodge-keeper had witnessed the reception of the packet, and Artress had dismissed the messenger and carefully concealed the packet upon her person, and returned to the house and to the presence of her mistress.

Lady Wynde had not yet arisen. A small inlaid table stood at her bedside supporting a round silver tray, upon which gleamed a silver *toilette* set of the daintiest proportions, and at the moment of her companion's entrance her ladyship was sipping her usual morning cup of black coffee, which was expected to tone and strengthen her nerves for the day.

She dropped her tiny gold spoon, and looked up eagerly and expectantly, and Artress, closing the door, drew forth the packet with an air of triumph.

"I have received it," said the gray companion, "and no one is the wiser for it. The messenger thinks it a book, and the people at the lodge did not even see it. We are in our usual luck, Octavia. Everything goes well with us."

"I am glad that Craven did not fail me," murmured Lady Wynde. "I feared he might find the task too heavy for him. But he is always prompt. Open the packet, Artress."

The companion obeyed, bringing to light the double letter, the one Craven Black had forged being securely lodged within the last letter Sir Harold Wynde had written to his wife from India.

Lady Wynde saw that the inner letter, addressed to Neva, was securely sealed, read the forged postscript to the letter addressed to her, and placed both under her pillow with a complacent smile.

"Craven is a clever fellow," she muttered. "And how much he loves me, Artress. Not many men could have seen the woman they loved marry another, but Craven and I have been worldly wise, and we shall reap the reward of our self-denial. If we had married three years ago we should have been poor now, mere hangers on upon the outskirts of society, tolerated for the sake of our connexions, but nothing more. But we determined to play a daring game, and behold our success. I am again a widow, with four thousand a year and a good house while I live, and I can lay up money if I choose while I continue the chaperone of my husband's daughter. If our game should continue to prosper and Neva should marry Rufus Black, Craven and I will make ten thousand a year more for the remainder of our lives. Rufus will have to sign an agreement giving us that amount out of Neva's fortune. Think of it, Artress; fourteen thousand a year!"

"Of which, if you win it, I am to have five hundred," said Artress, her gray face flushing. "And, if you do not win the ten thousand, I am to have two hundred pounds a year settled upon me for life. Is not that our bargain?"

Lady Wynde nodded assent.

"And," continued Artress, "I am to enter society with you, to remain with you as your guest instead of companion. I have been necessary to you in playing this game. I have lived with you some three years now, and, though people know that I am a lady born, no one suspects that I am own cousin to Craven Black, and soon to be your cousin by marriage. We have joined our forces and wits together in this business, and we shall enjoy our success together."

This then was the secret of the connection between these two women, so unlike each other, yet so in unison in their schemes.

Mrs. Artress was the cousin of Craven Black, and, being poor as well as unscrupulous, she was the most faithful ally in his stupendously wicked schemes.

The interests of the three conspirators were indeed identical.

"I believe I will rise," said Lady Wynde. "I am impatient to give this letter to Neva, and to see how she receives it. Do you suppose she is up?"

"She has been up these two hours," answered Artress. "She has been all over the house, has talked with the butler and the servants, has visited the stable and gardens, and has even been into the park. She means to assert her dignity as mistress of Hawkhurst, and to win the hearts of her dependents, so that in case she disagrees with you they will support her."

Lady Wynde frowned darkly.

"Miss Neva is not yet of age, so, although she owns Hawkhurst, there may be a question whether she is its mistress, or whether I, her guardian and her father's widow, am mistress here."

Her ladyship pulled the bell-cord at her bed-head, summoning her maid.

Artress retired into Lady Wynde's sitting-room, and, upon the appearance of her attendant, the widow arose and attired herself in a white morning wrapper with crimson trimmings, and put upon her head a small square of white lace adorned with crimson bows.

She had some time since discarded her widow's cap as "too horribly unbecoming."

She ascertained that Neva was now in her own rooms, and took her way thither, the forged letters in her hand.

Neva was alone when her step-mother, after a preliminary knock upon the door, entered her sitting-room, and she greeted Lady Wynde with a smile of welcome.

Neva was looking very lovely this morning, flushed with her early exercise, her red-brown eyes strangely brilliant, her red-brown hair arranged in crimps and braids.

She wore a simple dress of white lawn, made short to escape the ground, and her ribbons and ornaments were of black.

Lady Wynde thought that Neva's half-mourning attire was a reproach to her, and this fancied reproach, coupled with Neva's bright, spirited beauty, gave an impulse to her incipient dislike to the girl.

A vague jealousy of Neva's youth and loveliness had found place in her heart on the previous evening.

Now that faint spark became fanned into a burning flame. She aspired to be a social queen, and here under her very roof, and under her chaperonage, was a girl whom she felt sure would eclipse her. She would not be known in society as the handsome Mrs. Black, but as the chaperone of the beautiful Miss Wynde.

Despite her anger and jealousy, nothing could have been more bland and affectionate than the greeting of Lady Wynde to her step-daughter. She kissed her with seeming tenderness, and caressed her bright hair as she said:

"How animated you look, my dear—fairly sparkling! I should fancy that you have an electric sort of temperament—all fire and glow. Is it not so? You remind me of your father, Neva. It will be very sweet to have you with me, but my grief at my husband's awful death has been so great that until now I could never bear to look upon his daughter's face. I fancied you would look even more like him, and I could not have borne the resemblance in my first grief."

Lady Wynde sighed deeply, and sat down upon the blue silken couch, drawing Neva to a seat beside her.

"I have come in to have a long confidential talk with you, my child," resumed her ladyship. "There should be between you and me only the tenderest relations. Your poor dear father desired us to be all the world to each other, and for his sake, as well as your own, I intend to be a true and good mother to you."

"Thank you, madam," said Neva, gravely, yet gratefully. "I will try to deserve your kindness, and to be a daughter to you."

"You do not call me mother," suggested Lady Wynde, reproachfully.

The young girl coloured, and her brilliant eyes were suddenly shadowed. Her scarlet lips quivered an instant as she said, gently:

"Pardon me, dear Lady Wynde, but one has but one mother. I love my dead mother as if she were living, even though I know her only through my dear father's description of her. I cannot give you her title, and I think it would hardly be appropriate. You are too young to be called mother by a grown-up girl. Does it not seem so to you?"

"Possibly you are right. Suit yourself, my dear. I seek only your happiness. I can be a mother to you, even if you decline to give me the name."

"I can be equally a daughter to you, dear Lady Wynde," said Neva. "We shall be like sisters, I trust. I desire to say that I hope you will consider yourself as fully mistress of Hawkhurst as when poor papa was here. I shall not interfere with your

rule here, even if I may, until I attain my majority. While I live my home shall be a home to my father's widow."

"You are very kind, my dear. All these things will settle themselves hereafter. I have now to deliver to you a last message from your dear father—a message, as I might say, from the grave. Your father's voice speaks to you from the other world, my dear Neva, and I know that you will heed its call."

Her ladyship drew forth the packet of letters, and laid it on Neva's knee.

"You have there," continued Lady Wynde, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "the last letter I ever received from my dear husband. You may read it. You will see that he had a presentiment of his approaching death; that a gloom hung upon him that he could not shake off. That letter was written the night before his tragic death."

Neva opened the letter with trembling hands and read it, even to the postscript upon the last page which had been forged by the cunning hand of Craven Black.

Her tears fell as she read it.

"The enclosure—ah, you have not seen it," said Lady Wynde—"is the letter alluded to in that last page of the letter to me. You see that it has never been opened. It is a sealed document to me in every sense, although, as poor Sir Harold often told me of his secret wishes in regard to your future, I have some suspicion of its contents. Your father requested me, should he die in India, to give you this letter one year after his death. The appointed time has now arrived, and I deliver into your hands the last letter your father ever wrote, and it contains his last sacred wishes in regard to you. You are to receive it as an addendum to his will, as a sacred charge, as if his voice were speaking to you from his home in heaven!"

The young girl received it with an uncontrollable agitation.

"I—I must read it alone," she said, brokenly.

"Very well, dear. Go into your dressing-room with it, and when you have finished reading it come back to me. I have more to say to you."

Neva departed without a word, and went into the adjoining room.

As the door closed behind her Lady Wynde softly arose, crossed the floor, and peeped in upon the young girl's privacy through the key-hole of the door.

Neva was alone in her dressing-room, and was kneeling down before a low chair upon which she had laid the forged letter, as yet unopened. The baronet's widow watched the girl as she examined the address and the seal, then cut open the top of the letter with a pocket-knife.

Neva unfolded the closely written sheet, stamped with her father's monogram, and, with low sobs and tear-blinded eyes, began to read the letter, accepting it without doubt or question as her father's last letter to her.

Lady Wynde's eyes gleamed, and a mocking smile played about her full, sensual lips, as Neva read slowly page after page, still upon her knees, now and then pausing to kiss the handwriting she believed to be her father's.

The forger's work had been well done. The tender pet names by which Sir Harold had loved to call his daughter were often repeated, with such protestations of affection as would most stir a loving daughter's heart when perusing them long after the death of her father, and believing them to have been written by that father's hand.

"Oh, papa! poor, poor, papa!" the girl sobbed. "He foresaw my loneliness and desolation, and left these last words to cheer me. I will remember your wishes so often expressed in this and other letters. I will be kind, and gentle, and obedient to Lady Wynde. I will try to love her for your sake."

When she had grown calmer Neva read on. As she read that her father had a last request to make of her she smiled through her tears and murmured:

"I am glad that he has left me something to do—whatever it may be. I should like to feel that I am obeying him still, although he is in heaven. Dear papa!—your 'request' is to me a sacred command, and I shall so consider it."

Lady Wynde's eyes glittered like balls of jet. She had estimated rightly the childlike trust of Neva in her father's love and devotion to her.

"She accepts the whole thing as genuine," thought the delighted schemer. "Our success is certain. But let me see how she takes it when she finds what the 'request' is."

Neva perused the letter slowly, and again and again, with careful deliberation. Her surprise became apparent on her features, but there was no disbelief, no distrust, betrayed in her truthful face.

But a wan whiteness overspread her cheeks and lips, and a weary look came into her eyes as she folded the letter at last and hid it in her bosom. She bent her head as if in prayer, and murmured words which Lady Wynde tried in vain to hear. They were simple—only these:

"It is very strange—very strange; but papa meant it for the best. He feared to leave me unprotected and a prey to fortune-hunters. Who is this Rufus Black? Oh, if papa had only mentioned Lord—Lord Towyn!"

The very thought brought a vivid scarlet to Neva's face in place of her strange pallor, and, as if frightened at her own thought, she arose and went to the open window and leaned upon the casement.

Lady Wynde stole back to her couch, and she was sitting upon it the picture of languor when Neva returned, very pale now and subdued, with a shadow of trouble in her eyes.

"You have finished your letter so soon, dear?" asked the step-mother, sweetly. "I believe I can guess what were the last injunctions to you of your dear father. He often told me of his plans for you. Shall you do as he desired?"

Again the glowing scarlet flush covered Neva's cheeks, lips, and even her slender throat.

"My father's last wishes are a command to me," she said, slowly, yet as if her mind were quite made up to obey the supposed wishes of her father.

"It was Sir Harold's request that you should marry a young man in whom he took considerable interest—one Rufus Black, was it not?" asked Lady Wynde.

Neva uttered a low assent.

"And you will marry him?"

"My father liked him well enough to make him my—my husband," said Neva. "I can trust my father's judgment in all things. I never disobeyed papa in his life, and I cannot do so now that he seems to speak to me from heaven. If—if Rufus Black should ever propose marriage to me, and if he is still worthy of the good opinion papa formed of him, I—I—"

Her voice broke down as she remembered the fair, boyish face, the warm blue eyes, the tawny hair, and noble nature of Lord Towyn, and again with inward shame the question framed itself in her mind—why could not her father have recommended to her affection young Arthur Towyn, whom her father had loved next to his own son? Why must he desire her to marry a man she had never seen?

"You will marry Rufus?" demanded Lady Wynde as the girl's pause became protracted.

Neva bowed her head—she could not speak.

Lady Wynde's face gleamed, and an evil light gleamed in her eyes. Her heart throbbed wildly with her evil triumph.

"You are indeed a good and faithful daughter, Neva," she said, caressingly. "In accordance with your father's wishes I must give Mr. Black every chance to woo you. I believe he knows something of what Sir Harold designed for you and him, and he is at this moment at Wyndham village. He is staying at the inn with his father, and both will call upon you this evening."

"So soon?"

"The sooner the better. I have not seen Rufus Black, but his father called here last evening. The father knew poor Sir Harold intimately. Neva, dear, in honour of your guests, and in deference to my wishes, you ought to lay aside all vestige of your mourning to-day. You have worn black for a year, and that is all that modern society demands."

"The outward garb does not always indicate the feelings of the heart," said Neva. "I will change my manner of dress since you desire it, but I shall mourn for papa all my days."

As Neva became thoughtful and abstracted Lady Wynde soon took her leave.

She found Artress in her sitting-room, and the gray companion had no need to ask of her success.

"Our silly little fish has swallowed the bait," said Lady Wynde. "She is ready to immolate herself for dear papa's sake, although I could see that she is already interested in Lord Towyn. I am impatient for evening to come. I want to see how young Rufus Black will proceed in his task of winning the heiress of Hawkhurst."

CHAPTER XIV.

The hours of his father's absence in London were full of an insupportable suspense to Rufus Black. He was tempted to hurry up to town by the next train, and only his weakness and cowardice prevented him from flying to the succour of his wronged young wife. His terror of his father was a lion in his way.

And the act of perjury he had committed in declaring himself of age when obtaining his marriage licence—an act more of thoughtlessness and boyish ardour than of deliberate falsehood—arose now between him and poor Lally like a wall of iron.

He had erred, and must accept the consequences, but he thought to himself that he would give all his hopes of heaven if Lally might have been spared from participating in his punishment.

Anguished and despairing, he put on his hat and hurried out into the street, eager for fresh air and for action.

He passed out of the little hamlet, seeing no one, and wandered into the open country, where a noble

park bordered one side of the road, and fair, green fields stretched far away upon the other.

Both park and fields belonged to the domain of Hawkhurst, but Rufus Black was unconscious of the fact until he came up in full view of the great gray-stone house throned upon the broad ridge of ground, and set in its parks and gardens like some rare jewel in its setting.

Then he recognized the place, and muttered, moodily:

"So this is what I am to sell my soul for? A goodly price, no doubt, and more than it is worth. The owner of all this wealth cannot go begging for a husband, be she ugly as Medusa. Perhaps, after all, I have been troubling myself for nothing. She may not choose to accept a shabby young man, without a penny in his pocket, and with a gloomy face. If she should refuse me I daresay that father will let me go back to Lally."

This thought afforded him some comfort, and he plodded on, seeking relief from his troubles in exertion.

He cared not whither he went, and his surprise was great when at last, arousing from his abstraction, he found himself in the streets of Canterbury. He was near an inn of the humbler sort, and, with a sudden recklessness as to what became of him, he turned into the low bar-parlour and demanded a private room.

A bare little apartment on the upper floor, overlooking the inn stables, was assigned him. The floor was uncovered, and a deal table, rush-bottomed chair, and rickety lounge made up the sum of the furniture.

Rufus called for brandy and water. A decanter of brandy and a bottle of water were brought to him, and he entered upon a solitary orgie. He had not been used to drink, and the fiery liquid mounted to his brain, inducing stupidity and drunkenness.

For an hour or two he drank with brief intermission, but sleep overpowered him, and his head fell upon the table, and he snored heavily. With his red face, dishevelled hair, and stertorous breathing, his unmistakable aspect of drunkenness, he presented a terrible contrast to the hopeful boy artist with his honest eyes and loving soul who had made the dingy lodging in New Brompton a very Paradise to poor Lally.

The day wore on. A waiter looked in upon the poor wreck once or twice, and went away each time chuckling.

In the latter part of the afternoon Rufus awakened, and came to himself.

Ashamed and conscience-stricken, his first thought being of what Lally would think of him, he summoned a waiter and demanded strong coffee and food.

These were furnished him, and having partaken of them he settled his bill and set out to walk back to Wyndham.

"It makes no difference what becomes of me now," he said to himself as he strode along the return route. "I have started down hill, and I may as well keep on descending."

He had accomplished half the distance between Canterbury and his destination, when a four-wheeled cab, travelling briskly, came up behind him, compelling him to take to the side path.

The next moment the cab stopped, and Craven Black's head was protruded from the open window, and Craven Black's smooth voice called:

"Is that you, Rufus? What are you doing out here? Jump in! Jump in!"

Rufus obeyed, entering the vehicle, and the cabman drove on.

"Where have you been?" demanded the elder Black as the son settled himself upon the front seat opposite his father.

"I have spent the day in Canterbury," returned Rufus, sullenly.

"What have you been doing there?"

"Getting drunk," was the dogged answer.

The young man's face testified to his truthfulness. His eyes, wild in their glances, were blood-shot and watery, and he had a reckless air, as if he had thrown off all restraints of virtue and decency.

Craven Black experienced a sense of alarm. He began to fear lest his son would defeat all his plans by his obstinacy and recklessness.

"You do not ask me about the girl, Rufus," said the father, with more gentleness than was usual to him. "I have seen her."

"I supposed you had," was the reply. "I gave you her address."

"I told her the truth," said Craven Black, puzzled by his son's strange mood. "I explained to her kindly enough that her marriage with you was no marriage at all. She readily accepted the situation. She cried a little, to be sure, but she said herself that she was of lower rank than you, and that the match was too unequal. She—she said that of course all was over between you, and it was best you and she should never meet again. In fact, to render any such meeting impossible, she left her lodging while I was there."

Rufus fixed a burning gaze upon his father.

"I don't believe a word you say," he cried. "The news you carried to her broke my darling's heart. Do you suppose I do not know how much she loved me? I was all she had in the wide world—her only friend. Think of that, sir! Her only friend—and you have torn me from her. If she should die of grief, you will be her murderer."

Craven Black shuddered involuntarily, remembering poor Lally's flight, and his conviction that she had gone to destroy herself. His emotion did not pass unnoticed by his son.

"Poor Lally!" said Rufus, his voice trembling. "It's all over between us for ever. I have blighted her life, ruined her good name, and made her an outcast. Yet it was not I who did this. It was you. Her blood be upon your head. If I could find her and were free to woo her, she would never take me back, now that I have proved myself a perjurer and a pitiful, wretched coward. It is indeed all over between us. You can do what you like with the wreck you have made me. You might have given me a chance to redeem myself; you might have let me be true to her, but you would make me perjure myself doubly. I hope you are pleased with your work."

"Let there be an end of these silly boyish reproaches," exclaimed Mr. Black, harshly. "You have done with the girl, and are about to enter upon a new life. I have generously forgiven your errors and crimes. If you repeat the drunkenness of today I'll send you to prison. Try me, and see if I do not. I have brought you a trunk from London, filled with every requisite in the shape of new clothing and appropriate jewellery. I have spared no expense to make you look as my son should look. Now, by Heaven, if you disgrace me to-night by any recklessness and folly, and any mock despair, I'll prosecute you on that charge of perjury."

"You need not fear that I shall disgrace myself, or insult my hostess," said Rufus, doggedly. "You think no one has the instincts of a gentleman save yourself."

With such recriminations as these the pair beguiled their drive to Wyndham; nor did they cease from them after their arrival in Mr. Black's private parlour.

A sudden silence succeeded in good time, and reigned throughout the dinner, of which they partook together.

After dinner they retired to their respective rooms to dress.

The trunk Mr. Black had brought from London had been deposited in his son's chamber.

Rufus had the key, and unlocked the receptacle, bringing to light an ample supply of fine garments, perfume cases, a dressing-case, and a set of jewelled shirt studs in a little velvet case.

He arrayed his boyish figure in his new black garments, noticing even in his despair that they fitted him as if he had been measured for them. He waited in his room until his father came for him, and submitted sullenly to his father's careful inspection.

"You'll do," commented Craven Black. "If you act as well as you look I shall be satisfied. Mind, if you mention to Miss Wynde one word about the girl Lally it will be all over with you. The cab is waiting. Come on!"

They descended together to the cab, and were conveyed to Hawkhurst. On arriving at the mansion they alighted, and entered the great baronial hall, sending in their cards to Lady Wynde by the footman.

The baronet's widow having signified to her domestic that she was "always at home" to Mr. Black and his son, the visitors were ushered into the drawing-room.

Lady Wynde and Artress rose to receive them. Craven Black presented his son, and the baronet's widow welcomed the young man graciously. She was looking unusually well this evening, in a robe of pale amber silk, with a row of short locks trimmed squarely, nursery fashion, across her low, polished forehead, a long black curl trailing over each shoulder, and her cheeks glowing with suppressed excitement.

Rufus remembered having seen her before her marriage to Sir Harold Wynde, and his face brightened as at the sight of a friend.

He was acquainted, although slightly, with his father's cousin, Mrs. Artress, and as he held out his hand to her he looked his surprise at seeing her at the house of Lady Wynde.

"I am her ladyship's hired companion," said Artress, explainingly. "My husband left me very poor, you know, Rufus, and I have been in dear Lady Wynde's employ for some three years. I beg you not to recognize me as a relative, nor to mention the fact to any one. I have my family pride, you know, Rufus, and it is hard to be obliged to earn one's own living when one has not been brought up to it."

Her reasons for concealment of the relationship existing between them seemed to Rufus no reasons

at all, but he could not gainsay her wishes, and muttered that he would obey her.

"Miss Wynde has gone out for a solitary stroll in the park," observed Lady Wynde as Mr. Black's eyes wandered about the room. "I sent her out for the fresh air. She is not looking well, I regret to say. Mr. Rufus, if you will be kind enough to go down the wide park avenue you cannot fail to find her. I beg you will introduce yourself to her, and bring her back to the house."

Rufus bowed, and, stopping lightly out of the open window, moved leisurely towards the park.

"There is nothing like an informal meeting," said Lady Wynde, looking after the young man. "I planned to have it occur in this way, so that neither should be embarrassed by the presence of a third party."

"I should have preferred to keep my eye upon Rufus," remarked Mr. Black, uneasily. "Did you give the letter to the young lady?"

"Yes, and she received it exactly as I had expected she would. She is not at all the style of girl I looked for, Craven, and it is fortunate for our plans that she cared so much for her father."

While the conspirators were thus conversing Rufus crossed the lawn and entered the park by a small gate.

The wide avenue, a fine carriage drive, was readily found, and Rufus walked for some distance upon it, keeping a vigilant look-out for Miss Wynde. He was beginning to meditate a return to the house without the young lady when a flutter of white garments among the dusky shadows of a side path caught his gaze.

He plunged into the path without hesitation, and presently overtook the wearer of the garments, who was of course Miss Wynde.

Hearing his swift approach, she halted and turned her face towards him. Rufus also halted, strangely embarrassed under her brave, full glance.

She had laid aside her mourning garments, and wore rose-coloured ribbons and a profusion of frills and puffs and lace, in which she looked very fair and dainty and sweet. Her wine-brown eyes were all aglow, but her cheeks were pale, and her face was very grave, even to sadness.

"I beg your pardon," said Rufus, awkwardly raising his hat. "I am looking for Miss Wynde."

"I am Miss Wynde," said Neva, with gentle courtesy.

The young man's embarrassment was not lessened by this announcement.

"Lady Wynde sent me to look for you," he declared. "I—I am Rufus Black!"

Neva started and looked at him with her grave, serious eyes.

He appeared to advantage in his new garments, and his face was pale and worn by the day's dissipation. His sorrows and his sickness had given him a refined look to which he was not fully and fairly entitled, and his eyes met hers frankly and honestly, with a real admiration in their gaze.

Neva's cheeks flushed and her heart fluttered. Clearly Rufus Black had not made an unfavourable impression upon her in that first glance.

They turned and walked slowly up the path together, entering the avenue.

Rufus tried to conquer his unwonted awkwardness, and, singularly impressed with Neva's beauty, exerted himself to please her.

They sauntered on, stopping now and then to gather ferns or flowers, and when they emerged from the park upon the lawn they were chatting gaily, and were on the best of terms with each other.

Yet the heart of each was strangely sore. Neva thought of what "might have been," and sighed in her inmost soul that the husband her father was supposed by her to have chosen for her was not the one her heart most longed for.

Rufus mourned as bitterly as ever in his soul for his lost young wife, and felt that he should never be comforted.

Craven Black and Lady Wynde watched them as they approached the house, and the lip of the former curled as he muttered:

"So fade the griefs of the young! Unstable as water, Rufus is already this girl's lover!"

"They are mutually pleased," murmured Lady Wynde. "Her father's supposed wishes and this young man's interesting melancholy will soon efface Lord Fowyn's image from Neva's mind, if it has made any impression there."

It seemed indeed as if the opinion of the worldly wise conspirators would be justified.

The young couple halted upon the lawn, and Neva's gravity and the melancholy of Rufus began to disappear, when the lodge gates swung open, and three gentlemen came riding up the avenue.

The long twilight had begun, and even Neva's keen eyes could not recognize the new-comers at that distance, and she chatted merrily to Rufus, who answered as lightly.

But as the horsemen came nearer, and Neva regarded them more closely, a sudden silence fell upon her, and a strange shyness seized her.

It was a critical moment in the progress of the game which Craven Black and Lady Wyndo were playing, and these new-comers had arrived in time to give a turn to it.

For Neva recognized them as the three guardians of her property—Sir John Freise, Mr. Atkins, and the young Lord Towyn!

(To be continued.)

THE VINERY.

If the weather has been mild, a certain moist plumpness will have been observed among the buds of the vines. Silently and slowly, but surely, they have begun to grow. Were our ears attuned to finer sounds, we might already have heard the gentle ripple of the rising tide of life, and a rushing movement among the scaly envelope of the buds. They have begun to throw off their winter robes, and to prepare spring fashions in which to greet the rising sun.

It is our business to wait upon and assist this general awakening of the powers of life, quietly and unobtrusively to lead, rather than force it on. Progress without exhaustion must be our aim, and on no account must we verify afresh the old proverb, "the more haste the less speed." This is often the cruel fate that overtakes the lady or amateur horticulturist. In a fit of enthusiasm life is whipped on at express speed. It is so pleasant to note its progress, to see how much we can do, and how soon. But, alas, Nature will assuredly have her revenge. And swift and crushing, even unto death, the avenger too often is. By pushing the spurs of heat and moisture sharply into vines or other plants, the rate of growth is tremendous, till exhaustion overtakes it, then all is over. This impatience is as surely fatal to vegetable life as to rush blindly down an incline ending in a precipice would be to ours. If we would be refreshed, gladdened with rich, fine clusters by-and-by, let us move our vines gently at first. Coax them with our sympathy, excite them by our tears. In other words, enwrap them round with a gentle, genial warmth of from 45 to 55 deg. In such an atmosphere they will grow and carry their strength with them.

In warm weather change the air of the vinery daily by several hours' ventilation. At all times shut up the house early, say about three o'clock. A penny saved is a penny earned, and the more of the sun's heat you can bottle away in your vinery early in the afternoon the less coal will be needed from your cellar at night. The sun's heat not only is free of cost, while coals are dear, but its warmth is better far for the vines than fire heat. This early closing is of immense importance in horticulture, but singularly enough it is difficult to render it popular with villa gardeners. It is to be hoped that the recommendation to close early and save your coal and strengthen the vines may do something to popularize the early closing of all plant houses.

A TWO-HORNED RHINOCEROS.—A female rhinoceros, singularly remarkable for bearing two horns one above the other respectively on the forehead and nose, has arrived in England, for the Hamburg Zoological Society. The species is known in zoology as *Rhinoceros bicornis*. This novel living specimen is a native of Sumatra, and estimated to be of great value. The animal is about the height of a small horse, but more bulky, and is apparently so healthy, happy, and tame that (says the *Times*) any one having the courage may safely not only place his hand in its huge, ungainly looking mouth, but may leisurely take it out again.

A SETTLED PLAN OF LIFE.—There are some who have no settled plans of life to follow, no determined purpose to fulfil. They are deficient in firmness, and unwilling or unable to persevere in what they undertake. They enter upon schemes without a clear conception of what their ends should be, or how they should be accomplished. They are often weary of their purpose, and leave it even when it may be approaching a successful issue. Wanting a balance-wheel in their mental machinery, they are governed at one time by one motive and at another by a different one; or, undecided which of two or more diverse motives to obey, they follow one in part, and another in part, but yield fully to and derive advantage from neither. In their indecision they sometimes adopt several contradictory or irreconcilable plans, and of course they fail in all. Thus they are turning from purpose to purpose, floundering amidst difficulties and unyielding circumstances, striving, in vain, to make opposing plans and conditions harmonize together.

A WONDERFUL CARRIER-PIGEON.—From New Jersey we have a marvellous story of a carrier-pigeon, which we (*Nature*) commend to the notice of Mr. Tegetmeier. It performed the journey from Sopas Farm, Warren Co., N.J., to Sandusky, Ohio, a distance of 400 miles, in exactly an hour, and its condition on its arrival at the latter place is thus described:—"I found the greatest excitement had

followed the arrival of the pigeon. Mr. Smythe told me that at precisely two o'clock the bird came like an arrow into his house. His movement was more like a blue streak than a well-defined bird. He seemed but little exhausted, although nearly all the feathers were off his body, except the small patch held on his back by the gutta-percha which fastened the note. A few miles more would have worn every feather from his wings, and then he would have to depend upon the momentum already acquired to carry him on his journey, and to steer without a tail, and perhaps be killed in attempting to alight." No wonder the owner offers to match this pigeon, "when he has grown a new suit of feathers," for 1,000 dollars against any carrier-pigeon that has not done this distance in an equal time.

THE HEAVY BURDEN.

A LIFE SKETCH.

"RATHER a heavy burden, isn't it, my boy?" Clarence Spencer, to whom the words had been addressed, turned from his ledger and looked towards the speaker.

Clarence was a young man—not more than five-and-twenty—and was book-keeper for Mr. Solomon Wardle. It was Solomon Wardle, a pleasant-faced, keen-eyed man of fifty, who had spoken.

"A heavy burden, isn't it, Clarence?" the merchant repeated.

Still the young man was silent. His look indicated that he did not comprehend. He had been for some time bending over the ledger with his thoughts far away; and that his reflections were not pleasant ones was evident enough from the gloom upon his handsome face.

"My dear boy, the burden is not only heavy now, but it will grow heavier and heavier the longer you carry it."

"Mr. Wardle, I do not comprehend you."

"Ah, Clarence."

"I certainly do not."

"Didn't I call at your house for you this morning?"

Clarence nodded assent.

"And didn't I hear and see enough to reveal to me the burden that you took with you when you left? You must remember, my boy, that I am older than you are, and that I have been through the mill. You find your burden heavy, and I have no doubt that Sarah's heart is as heavily laden as is your own."

Then Clarence Spencer understood, and the morning's scene was present with him as it had been present with him ever since leaving home.

On that morning he had had a dispute with his wife. It had occurred at the breakfast-table. There is no need of reproducing the scene. Suffice it to say that it had sprang from a mere nothing, and had grown to a cause of anger.

The commencement had been a look and a tone, then a flash of impatience, then a rising of the voice, then another look—the voice rose higher; reason was unheeded, passion gained away, and the twain lost sight of the warm, enduring love that lay smitten and aching deep down in their hearts, and felt for the time only the passing tornado.

Clarence remembered that Mr. Wardle had entered his house, and had caught a sign of the storm.

He thought of one thing more—how miserably unhappy he had been all the morning; and he knew not how long his burden of unhappiness was to be borne.

"Honestly, Clarence, isn't it a heavy and thankless burden?" continued the merchant.

The book-keeper knew that his employer was his friend, and that he was a true-hearted Christian man, and, after a brief pause, he answered:

"Yes, Mr. Wardle, it is a heavy burden."

The merchant smiled and sat down. His face beamed with goodness, and an earnest light was in his calm blue eyes.

"My boy, I am going to venture upon a bit of fatherly counsel. I hope I shall not offend."

"Not at all," said Clarence.

He winced a little as though the probing gave him new pain.

"In the first place," pursued the old man, with a quiver of emotion in his voice, "you love your wife?"

"Love her?"

"That is enough. I know you love her."

"Oh! Mr. Wardle—I—I—"

"You love her as well as you did when you married her?"

"Better! better! I love her more and more."

"Do you think she loves you in return?"

"Loves me in return?"

"Ay—what do you think about it?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know."

"You know she loves you?"

"Yes!"

"You know that deep down in her heart she holds your love as a most sacred treasure?"

"Yes, I know it."

"Then you must admit that the trouble of this morning came from no ill-feeling at heart?"

"Of course not."

"It was but a surface squall, for which you at least are very sorry?"

After a moment's hesitation he replied:

"Yes, yes—I am heartily sorry."

"Now mark me, Clarence, and answer honestly. Don't you think your wife is as sorry as you are?"

"I cannot doubt it."

"And don't you think she is suffering at this time?"

"Yes."

"Is she not probably, in the seclusion of her home, suffering more keenly than you are?"

"I doubt that, Mr. Wardle. At all events, I hope she may not be suffering more."

"Very well. Let that pass. You know she is bearing her part of the burden?"

"Yes—I know that."

"Now, my boy, do you realize with whom the heavier part of this burden is lodged?"

Clarence looked upon his interlocutor wonderingly.

"If the storm had all blown over, and you knew that the sun would shine when you next entered your home, you would not feel so unhappy?"

Clarence assented.

"But," continued Mr. Wardle, "you fear that there will be gloom in your home when you return?"

The young man bowed his head as he murmured an affirmative.

"Because," the merchant added, with a touch of parental sternness in his tone, "you are resolved to carry it there!"

Clarence looked up in surprise.

"I—I carry it?"

"Ay—you have the burden in your heart, and you mean to carry it home. Remember, my boy, I have been there, and I know all about it. I have been very foolish in my lifetime, and I have suffered. I suffered until I discovered my folly, then I resolved that I would suffer no more. Upon looking the matter fairly and honestly in the face I found that the burdens which had so galled me had been self-imposed. Of course such burdens can be thrown off. Now you have resolved that you will go home to your dinner with a heavy heart and a dark face. You have no hope that your wife will meet you with a smile. And why? Because you know that she has no particular cause for smiling. You know that her heart is burdened with the same affliction which gives you so much unrest. So you are fully assured that you are to find your home shrouded in gloom. Furthermore, you don't know when that gloom will depart, and when the blessed sunshine of love will burst in again. Why don't you know? Because it is not now in your heart to sweep the cloud away. You say to yourself—I can bear it as long as she can! Am I not right?"

Clarence did not answer in words.

"I know I am right," pursued the merchant; "and very likely your wife is saying to herself the same thing. So your hope of sunshine does not rest upon the willingness to forgive, but upon the inability to bear the burden. By-and-by it will happen, as it has happened before, that one of the twain will surrender from exhaustion, and it will be likely to be the weaker party. Then there will be a collapse, and a reconciliation. Generally the wife falls first beneath the galling burden, because her love is keenest and most sensitive. The husband, in such case, acts the part of a coward. When he might, with a breath, blow the cloud away, he cringes and cowers until the wife is forced to let the sunlight in through her breaking heart."

Clarence listened, and was troubled. He saw the truth, and he felt its weight. He was not foolish, nor was he given to falsehood. During the silence that followed he reflected upon the past, and he called to mind scenes just such as Mr. Wardle had depicted.

This brought him to the remembrance of how he had seen his wife weep when she had failed and sunk beneath the heavy burden, and how often she had sobbed upon his bosom in grief for the error.

The merchant read the young man's thoughts, and after a time he arose and touched him upon the arm.

"Clarence, suppose you were to put on your hat and go home now. Suppose you should think on your way only of the love and blessing that might be, and, with this thought, you should enter your cottage with a smile upon your face, and you should put your arms round your wife's neck, and kiss her; and softly say to her, 'My darling, I have come home to throw down the burden I took away with me this morning. It is greater than I can bear. Suppose you were to do this, would your wife refuse you?'"

"Repulse me?"

"Ah, my boy, you echo my words with an amazement which shows that you understand me. Now, sir, have you the courage to try the experiment? Dare you be so much of a man? Dare you thus try

to imitate your Divine Teacher? Or do you fear to let your dear wife know how much you love her? Do you fear that she would respect and esteem you less for the deed? Tell me. Do you think the cloud of unhappiness might thus be banished? Oh, Clarence, if you would but try!"

Sarah Spencer had finished her household work, and had sat down with her sewing in her lap. But she could not ply her needle. Her heart was heavy and sad, and tears were in her eyes.

Presently she heard the front door open and a step in the hall.

Certainly she knew that step! Yes—her husband entered, and there was a smile upon his face. She saw it through her gathering tears, and her heavy heart leaped up.

He came and put his arms around her neck, and kissed her—and he said to her, in broken accents: "Darling, I have come home to throw down the burden I took away with me this morning. It is greater than I can bear!"

She, trying to speak, pillowed her head upon his bosom, and sobbed and wept like a child.

Oh! could he forgive her? His coming with the blessed offering had thrown the whole burden of reproach back upon herself. She saw him noble and generous, and she worshipped him.

But Clarence would not allow her to take all the blame. He must share that.

"We will share it so evenly," he said, "that its weight shall be felt no more. Now, my darling, we will be happy?"

"Always!"

Mr. Wardle had no need, when Clarence returned to the office, to ask the result. He could read it in the young man's brimming eyes, and in his joy-inspired face.

It was a year after this—and Clarence Spencer had become a partner in the house—that Mr. Wardle, by accident, referred to the events of that gloomy morning.

"Ah!" said Clarence, with a swelling bosom, "that was the most blessed lesson I ever received. My wife knows who gave it to me."

"It serves you yet, my boy?"

"Ay—and it will serve us while we live. We have none of those old burdens of anger to bear now. They cannot find lodgment with us. The flash and the jar may come, as in the other days—for we are but human, you know—but the heart which has firmly resolved not to give an abiding-place to the ill-feeling will not be called upon to entertain it. Sometimes we are foolish; but we laugh at our folly when we see it, and throw it off—we do not nurse it till it becomes a burden." S. C. J.

THE GIPSY'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XX.

Soon after the boy had parted from Inez upon his second voyage in the "Lancet" the company to which the young equestrienne was attached left Barcelona and established themselves for the season at the capital.

When she first appeared in the arena the vast building, where the company performed, was crowded to its utmost capacity. For weeks the success of the management was very great.

Inez was now in her sixteenth year.

In Spain young ladies mature at a much earlier age than in other countries. She had grown to be a superb, elegantly formed, attractive woman. The throngs who crowded the circles during her performances in the ring were enormous. No such audiences had ever before been seen.

She was frequently the recipient of valuable presents, as she had previously been at Barcelona; but she was still, in years, a minor, and her nominal guardians meanly robbed her. All her gains went into the general maw sooner or later.

She had been at Madrid seven months, working very hard for a merely respectable support, and apparently she was surrounded by myriads of friends. Now she was hoping and looking for the coming of Carlos, when she would be likely to be relieved, she thought, from the tinselled life she had been leading from infancy—which she hated, notwithstanding all its outward attractiveness—when, one evening, a most unfortunate accident occurred, which terminated the professional career of this beautiful girl.

She had on this occasion already performed her famous "flying feat," upon her spirited and ambitious charger, who literally flew about the great arena at frightful speed, while the intrepid girl went through air like a winged rocket, leaping, as her rushing horse dashed on, straight through a chain of balloons held up in her route by attendants, and alighting on the other side upon the rushing animal's back, time after time—after plunging through these bal-

loons—as the steed sped round, amid thunders of shouts, when, as she went past the last of the floating obstacles, she missed her foothold, by springing too far ahead of the flying saddle, and came to the ground, to the consternation of the multitude who were applauding her magnificent efforts. She fell flat on her face.

The frightened animal struck one hind foot into her side, and the other crashed down upon her head, as he sprang madly away, leaving his beautiful rider utterly senseless.

The injured favourite was quickly borne out of the arena, to which, as we have said, she never again returned.

Twenty years prior to this period there dwelt near the little town of Bippoli, at the foot of the Apennines, a poor couple, who owned a few sheep and goats, and fewer acres of the land of Spain.

They were the parents of Inez, who was born some three years after their marriage.

Marie, the mother, was not very watchful of her little one, and one day there came along a company of strolling equestrians; Inez followed the train, gazed at the showy-looking horses, trotted out of the town, and was noticed by the leader of the company, who halted and raised her up.

"Who be you, my darling?" he asked.

"Nobody," said the child, naively.

"What is your name then?"

"Inez," said the simple child.

"Where do you belong?"

"I don't know, senor."

"Where do you live?"

"In the mountains, senor."

"With whom?"

"The goats and sheep."

"Who is your father?"

"What, senor?" asked she, staring at him.

"What is your father's name?"

"He's dead—killed in the war."

"Ah! And your mother—who is she?"

"I don't know."

"Where are you going now?"

"Nowhere. I am looking at the horses."

"Do you like horses?"

"Yes, indeed. I like to ride on them."

"Will you ride? Come! Get up with me."

"Indeed I will, senor."

And up she got! The manager of the equestrian company took the child along with him. He thought he saw something of her future in her pretty face and spirited manner; and she never again beheld her mountain home.

It required but little instruction to render this child a great performer in the ring, and the man who had stolen her turned her talents, as we have seen, to good account.

Did he care for her now? Yes, he did for a few days, for it was hoped she was not so badly hurt as it proved, and he thought she would recover and return to the arena, and repair his breaking fortune. But Inez lay upon her bed for months after this terrible shock. Her head and ribs were injured. She was totally unconscious for many weeks.

Then she was prostrated with fever pains, and mental depression almost unendurable. But still she lay and suffered.

So a year passed away from the night when the lovely girl's career as an equestrienne was ended.

When she first came to consciousness she found herself in a very poorly furnished room upon a miserable bed, with an old woman fussing about the apartment, whose face she had never seen before.

"Where am I, duenna?" asked Inez, faintly.

"At Leganes," said the old woman.

"Leganes? Where is that?"

"Near the city."

"What city?" inquired Inez.

"Madrid. Don't talk; just you mustn't talk," said the duenna, not unkindly, but in a tone of mild authority.

She was a kind of professional nurse, but she hadn't been paid anything. The manager had promised, but did not perform. He had got the girl into the woman's house, and had gone off, leaving Inez to the tender mercies of this stranger, agreeing to return and discharge all bills that should accrue for her care; but he neither came nor sent any money. And she had now been there over two months.

"Why am I here?" queried Inez.

"I know nothing of you, only I say you must not talk," repeated the woman. "You're not strong enough. When you are better and stronger I will answer your questions, and ask you some too."

"Now. Ask me now," said Inez.

"No; not to-day. This is the first time you've showed any sign that your senses hadn't been knocked clean out of you. Keep quiet. Got well. Then we'll talk."

And the duenna went out of the room.

Inez looked about her and around the apartment.

She couldn't understand it; she put her hand to the side of her head; it ached there; it was sore. There was a wound—two of them—there. And her side pained, but not much.

She had evidently been hurt. She had forgotten how, if she ever knew, for she could not remember what had hurt her.

Thus she lay there all that day, the first time she had been conscious for months. But she was getting a little better now; still she was in pain and weak and very ill.

The duenna came next day.

"Am I stronger yet?" queried Inez, pleadingly, for she was anxious to know something about her troubles and condition.

"I hope you are," said the old woman.

"May I talk?"

"Yes, a little; not much."

"Tell me then why I am here."

"Because you were brought here."

"When, duenna?"

"Three months ago almost."

"Three months!" exclaimed Inez, surprised; then she said, "What is the matter with me?"

"You have been very ill—near to dying."

"Yes, it must be so. Was I not hurt?"

"Yes, indeed you were."

"How, duenna?"

"Kicked and trodden on by your horse."

"Oh, yes; it comes back to me," said Inez. "I remember. In the arena. I had forgotten it all. Where is he?"

"Who?" queried the old woman.

"The manager, my guardian, my friend?"

"Ay, friend," said duenna. "He's left you here, and gone long ago, and has never paid a real for your care and cost to me."

"That is strange. Whither have they gone?"

"I don't know. He said he would come and pay me. But I have never seen or heard from him since he left you on my hands. I can't support this much longer."

"Are you poor too?" queried Inez.

"Yes—very."

"I am sorry," said the girl.

"So am I. But that won't pay my bills."

"No; I see. I am poor too."

"So I judge. Your clothing is none of the best or most plentiful."

"I have some jewels. I will sell them and pay you. You shall not suffer," rejoined the girl.

"Where are your jewels?" exclaimed the old duenna.

"In my trunk," replied Inez, confidently.

"Where is that?"

"In my room in the hotel. It ought to be here."

"Yes; but it isn't, nor is it at your hotel. I sent there. The manager claimed everything, they tell me. He has your jewels then, also."

"If he took my trunk—yes," said Inez.

"He is your friend!" added the woman, sarcastically.

"I am afraid not. Let me think awhile, duenna," said the girl, sadly. "My head aches now!"

The poor, sad, dejected, suffering Inez turned wearily upon her hard, scanty pillow, and endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, and to realize, as well as she could, the deplorable situation into which she had been so suddenly thrust by her ill fortune.

But she was alone, still suffering from pain, anxiety, and physical prostration.

Alone—an orphan, friendless, crippled, penniless and deserted! and she soon grew worse again.

CHAPTER XXI.

DAY after day succeeded, and Inez grew weaker and weaker. The poor nurse could not obtain the nourishment this frail girl required to sustain life. The kind of food which the old woman subsisted on was of no use to Inez. The girl was slowly starving to death.

The gold left in her charge by Carlos—which she promised him she would use if she ever needed it—remained intact in the bank at Madrid.

It had been a long time since she left the money there for safe keeping, and she was scarcely conscious of her extremely wretched condition. The relapse into which she soon fell again was very severe, and no allusion had been made by her to the subject of this money. So the old woman knew nothing of that matter, and the gold remained where Inez had deposited it, with its accumulated interest for nearly two years.

Inez, as we have said, had been slowly sinking for weeks.

A few neighbours had come in—poor people from the sparsely inhabited village—who had the natural sympathy of women for each other when in physical distress; and these simple folk brought in for Inez their poor gifts of cordials and trifling delicacies—in



[FADING AWAY.]

her last days of suffering—which the duenna administered, from time to time, to ease her or smooth her way to the grave, whither all were convinced she was now hastening.

"She is very comely," said a visitor one day.

"Yes," said the duenna, in reply. "A beautiful girl to look at. But poor as poverty itself."

"Well, we haven't much to boast of on the score of wealth ourselves to be sure."

"Not more's the pity. But we ought not to be put upon by designing and dishonest people, nevertheless."

"Who?" asked her visitor. "She?" pointing to the unconscious but quiet girl on the pallet.

"No—no! Those who had charge of her, and they deserted her. She was brought here and left on my hands months ago, and I've never been paid a real for her board yet."

"Has she no friends?"

"No—not one!"

"Who is she?"

"I don't know. Inez they call her. An actress I think."

"Not the rider—eh?" said the woman, quickly.

"I don't know," answered the duenna. "I think she was once very popular, and made quite a noise in the ring. She was hurt there; kicked by her horse."

"I heard of that accident. It is a long time ago. She can never get well again—she's got not a friend left in the world—no money, no parents, no relatives, and she'll be better off. She won't find any worse place than that she's leaving, at any rate!"

"She has failed greatly since I saw her a week ago."

"I know it; I can see it. But she dies slowly, however," continued the old woman, turning away. She had had the village doctor in occasionally. He could do nothing for her. (There was nobody to pay him for his advice or for medicine.)

He said she was past help, and had no money. Two unfortunate circumstances! She must be buried even at the expense of the parish authorities.

The lovely girl who had so electrified the thousands of enthusiastic admirers lay dying among those who cared not whether she lived another hour, or what became of her emaciated remains, so that they were relieved of the burden.

And at last the sufferer again came to consciousness, to the surprise—and alarm almost—of the old woman, who chanced to be sitting near her.

But the poor girl was very weak. She could not speak above a whisper, and incoherently at that. Her wounds had healed, but her physical strength

had deserted her utterly, as if she were paralyzed, and she was totally helpless.

No one supposed she could have held out so long. The old woman was satisfied that she had been dying for two weeks. She was the more astonished, therefore, when she saw her motioning to speak, and heard what she subsequently said.

But this must be the last—the very last—the nurse believed, and she listened.

"My dying words, duenna!" murmured Inez, feebly; and the old woman opened her ears, for she had not heard the girl's voice for weeks before.

"What is it, Inez?" queried the woman, who, as the end was so near, could not but evince the tenderest sympathy, for she now saw that the poor creature was going. "What do you desire?"

"Nothing—but that you—listen," continued Inez, in a faltering whisper. "I am going, duenna, going. These are my last words. I have suffered terribly, but it's all passing away now. I shall soon be free now—free from pain, grief, abuse, neglect."

She paused a moment, then went on, in broken accents:

"Duenna, I am dying. My last words and my last thoughts are for a very dear friend—who is far away—long absent from me—I had supposed he would have sought me out ere this—my missing lover. I have not spoken of him before?" queried the girl.

"You haven't spoken of anything or anybody for a long time till now," said her nurse.

"No. I suppose so. How long?"

"A great while—weeks."

"So long. And he does not come either?"

"Who?" queried the duenna.

"My guardian."

"No. I wish he might. He never will though."

"And I have nothing to pay you with. I am sorry. It is no fault of mine. It is almost over now. You will soon be relieved of me, duenna. I am very grateful for all you have done for me. If Carlos were here he would pay you. He will not see me alive—but he will come—I trust. He will reward you. I leave him my dying love—tell him—duenna—"

And here the girl began to falter and speak incoherently.

"Who is Carlos?" asked the woman.

"Where! Bring him! Let me embrace him ere I die! Where?" murmured the girl, spasmodically, and understanding the woman to say "Here is Carlos" when she only inquired who he was.

Then the excitement subsided. Inez lay speechless.

She struggled to give utterance to some farther

expressions or directions, but she was too far gone, and the old woman could understand nothing save the words:

"Carlos, my dying love—money—his gold in bank

—Carlos, my love—"

And this was all!

It was just at nightfall. The sweet girl had faded until her pallid cheeks were as white as the sheet in which they bound her form four hours later.

She ceased to utter any sound whatever; then breathing was imperceptible, then pulsation stopped.

"Fair Inez" lay stark and silent. Her pain and troubles and sorrows were at an end.

The old duenna looked upon that whitened form, and, ah! how lovely did she seem, even in the embrace of death.

It was midnight. The pale moon shone in through the low window upon the pallid face, and all was quiet and solemn in that lovely chamber where the forsaken girl had uttered her last words, and breathed her fond murmurings of affectionate remembrance for her lover, into ears which did not comprehend or appreciate them.

It was all over at last.

One of the neighbours came in again, who had seen her that day and was convinced, as was the old woman, that the girl could not live the evening out.

"How is she?" asked her visitor, in a whisper.

"Gone!" replied the duenna, solemnly.

"Dead?" murmured the other.

"Yes; three hours ago."

The two women went to the bedside, and performed the last sad offices for the lifeless body.

Next day the wonder-loving peasants came in to look at the corpse, which was shrouded in a white sheet, and laid upon a clean pillow, stretched upon the humble pallet where the sufferer had lain for months in agony and unconsciousness.

Well did she deserve the name of "Inez the Beautiful!" White as marble she was now, and thin in flesh from long suffering and starvation, yet still lovely even in death.

As she lay there, prepared for the coffin which was to receive her remains for final interment, a score or two of the villagers around came in to view the body.

Some had heard of the popular equestrienne, some had seen her, a few knew of the accident, all admired her rare beauty, and every one now had a word of pity for her untimely fate when pity was too late.

But no friend approached. Carlos was far away upon a desolate island—just at this time getting ready to leave it in his boat.

"Beautiful Inez" lay there shrouded for burial.

(To be continued.)



[UNEXPECTED.]

THE SNAPT LINK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Sybil's Inheritance," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Truths that wake to perish never,
Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavour
Nor all that is at enmity with joy
Can utterly abolish nor destroy.

It was a scene for an artist when that terrible announcement was made in the lone Westmoreland cottage, amidst all the solemn solitudes that lend thrilling and awe-striking horror to every listener, and subduing gravity to every gayest emotion.

"An officer of justice—a curtailment of air and liberty and love and all that the soul holds most dear for life!"

Such was Aubrey Lestrangle's taunting addendum, and the wretched truth, patent to the hearts of the listeners, only too surely endorsed its meaning.

But there was more calm resignation, more dignified patience in the face and mien of the threatened one than of him who was apparently an unconcerned auditor of the threat.

Gertrude Mgrave stood with unblenching gaze, awaiting the next words and acts of her cruel foe, while Rupert's features were convulsed with remorseful agony as his quick eye detected the dark figures in the doorway of the apartment, whose identity he could but too well imagine.

"Fiend! villain! bloodhound! What means this outrage?" he exclaimed, fiercely. "I tell you it shall not be. I will defend her with the last drop of my blood if need be. She is innocent as an unborn babe."

"Rather a sudden change in your ideas, Mr. De Vere," sneered Aubrey. "It is not so many weeks since you were in hot pursuit of this young lady, as I presume she must be entitled, and ready to drag her with your own hand to the gallows."

"Hush, man! peace! or you will drive me to desperation," returned Rupert, sternly. "I was mad and worse than mad, and you were a fiend urging on the frenzy for your own base ends."

"Indeed! I should have thought I ought to have been the one least liable to suspicion on that score," replied the other, with an attempt at withering scorn that died away in a sickly, forced, ghastly sneer. "Surely I must have the most disinterested claim to avenge my dead betrothed."

"When her fortune is the result of such vengeance," returned De Vere, fiercely. "I tell you I distrust and I suspect you, Aubrey Lestrangle. Evil thoughts burn my brain. All is suspicion and misery in this per-

plexing business. Suspicion hangs and floats darkly from one to another of those accused. I have but one fixed, settled purpose left—to defend the innocent and punish the guilty in the frightful deed."

"Peace, dear Rupert—peace, for my sake," interposed Gertrude, her soft, silvery tones coming like a strain of music between the angry disputants; "Heaven will defend and bring the truth to light in its own time. Vengeance belongs to it, and this bold, bad, crafty man, who but a brief space since would have purchased wealth with the hand of one he calls a murderer, shall be defeated in his wicked plans."

There was an elevated calmness in her beautiful yet pale features that gave something unearthly to her expression, and imparted a kind of prophetic might to her low-toned denunciations of her persecutor.

Perhaps Aubrey's pulses beat more irregularly and his frame trembled more nervously than hers whom he came to drag to prison and possible death.

"It is scarcely consistent for one who has been for so many months a fugitive from justice to affect such bravery and self-assertion," scoffed Aubrey; "but it is convenient when other protests fail."

Rupert clenched his hand fiercely at the taunt, as if he would willingly have felled the slanderer to the ground. But Gertrude passed quickly between the foes.

"Rupert, dear cousin, command yourself," she murmured, softly. "Remember what terrible consequences have already resulted from unbridled passion—the blood that has been shed, of which even you believed me guilty. Leave me in Heaven's hands; it will protect, it can bring the truth to light."

The young man buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"The reproach is just," he said; "I have hunted you till you are delivered over to your enemies. It was I who revealed your refuge to that cold-blooded fiend. Gertrude, on my very knees I entreat your pardon, but I can never forgive myself."

"My pardon has never been needed, because I never blamed you," she said, gently; "and my heart is at ease now since I am as convinced of your innocence as my own. It is the guilty one who will—who shall suffer the true tortures of the punishment."

"Who, pray, do you suppose is that guilty one, since you and this doughty champion deny the charge?" said Aubrey, bitterly.

Gertrude scarcely could have accounted for the sudden impulse that ran through her nerves and brought to her eyes the glittering, piercing flash that was turned on her persecutor, in the wild thought that darted through her brain.

"Aubrey Lestrangle, it may be that your own conscience could best answer that question," she said; "the true criminal is, it may be, known to you and sheltered by you."

He had glared like a tiger, and a sudden paleness had overspread his face at her first words. Then, as she ended, he indulged a melancholy smile scarcely less ghastly in its affected indifference.

"I think I understand you," he said, "but it is only a pitiable attempt to shift the odium on the innocent. Envy and jealousy are not always so terrible in their consequences as in your unhappy heart. But enough of this. Are you ready?"

The officers, who had been till now lingering at the threshold, were at the moment replying as it seemed to the questions of some new-comer, and in another instant the venerable form of Mr. Clinton entered the room.

"What madness is all this?" he said, hastily glancing round him. "Who is insane enough to charge this delicate, heroic child with so foul and violent a crime as murder? It is too monstrous in its absurdity."

"That will be for a jury to decide, sir," returned Aubrey, sternly. "I have no more leisure for argument, so I must relinquish the task of answering any objections you have to the judge's warrant, and desire these officials to do their duty without farther delay."

"Dear, kind friend, how can I thank you? At least I would implore you to believe me innocent," said the young girl, seizing the clergyman's venerable hand, that was furrowed and drawn with age, and pressing her lips to it.

"I will do more, child—I will not rest till your innocence is proved," returned the old man. "And, harkye, even now I will put some consolation into your bitter cup. Come with me; I have that to tell which if I read you aright will either place the means of happiness or of revenge in your power."

"Excuse me, sir—a prisoner cannot be allowed to elude her captors," said Aubrey, laying his hand on Gertrude's arm.

"Peace, man! There is but one door to this tiny cot; you are three—you can surely guard its outlet," was the angry reply. "I reverence the girl's honour and rectitude too truly to tarnish them with the stain of escaping from the vindication of her innocence. Come, Gertrude, child, I will not detain you long."

Without waiting for another remonstrance he led the girl into the little room which she had occupied since Rupert's convalescence as her chamber.

There was a pause after their departure as of angry foes who were forced to suspend hostilities. Aubrey walked to the window and sullenly looked out from

its narrow casement on the sublime prospect of mountain and lake. But he heeded not what he gazed upon.

There was a different scene passing before his eyes, and thrilling his very heart. With something of the prescience which the old superstition attaches to the shudder when the future grave is passed over, he seemed to guess that the confidences passing in the adjoining chamber might treat of him and of his ruin.

He could catch the low murmur of voices; he fancied that a sudden cry of some strong emotion escaped the lips of the accused and suffering girl, followed by a low and warning "Hush" from her companion.

All this close vicinity and the slender partitions of that miniature residence enabled him to overhear; then he distinctly discerned the low murmur of voices for a brief space longer ere the sound of footsteps heralded the return.

But when they did re-enter the room he was fairly perplexed by the glad brightness in that pale young face—the peace which had calmed the sad and contracted brow.

Some strange and overwhelming consideration must have worked the change; and Aubrey tortured himself in vain to devise what that consolation could be.

The girl walked up to Rupert with a firm step.

"I am ready now," she said. "Do not fear for me, dear cousin—I am armed for the worst. All bitterness has gone out of this trial now. I only need fear Heaven and my own conscience, and they can both testify my innocence; and you," she continued, "for my sake bear up and get strong, dear Rupert. You know not what is in store for you after these bitter trials, and so long as you keep health and a good conscience you are ready for weal or woe. Mark me, dear cousin—there will be sunshine in your clouds, and peace, and happiness, unless you cast them wantonly from you. Will you promise for Gertrude's sake to be patient and strong?"

"I will. I will lay down my very life for your sake, my injured, generous girl," he returned, sadly; "but you give me a harder task to perform."

"So much the greater proof of affection, Rupert. I ask your promise to abstain alike from violence and despair. Is that too much for Gertrude to implore from her cousin?"

"No, no; I will obey you to the very letter," he returned, mournfully. "But if aught should happen to you, Gertrude, I cannot answer for myself."

"We shall meet again in any case," she said, smiling, with an angelic, bright calm in her features; "till then at least I hold you bound. Now, farewell. We must not let these strange men have power to move us. Be calm and strong as I am."

He was calmed by her very manner; it was so soothing, so animating in its bravery. As he bent down to kiss her cold brow there came a hallowed influence—a solemn vow in his heart that in itself was sufficient to have repaid the heroism of the much-enduring girl.

The simple preparations were soon made.

She wrapped herself in the large cloak which had been her shelter when she fled from Dunefoot Castle; and the few necessities she had with her were carefully secured by the good old clergyman's own hands. Even the rough and hardened officers of justice could not be harsh in their treatment of that delicate and submissive prisoner.

"You will not have to walk far, miss," said one of them as she stepped from the threshold of the cottage that had been for her a scene of such mingled misery and joy. "There is a carriage waiting at the entrance of the valley, and that will take us to Cuckermouth. We shall be in plenty of time for the night train, or we could not have waited so long I can tell you."

The girl bowed her head meekly; then she turned to Aubrey, who was uneasily waiting these final arrangements.

"Mr. Lestranger—one word," she said, stepping to his side, somewhat apart from the officers. "You cannot deceive me, you do not believe me guilty of Hilda's murder, or you—even you—could not have offered to take one so wicked and polluted as your wife. Hilda loved you; from her very heart she was all yours—full of joy and hope and trust. For her sake I would save you as it were from yourself, and the consequences of your present treachery. There is evil in your heart. It is gold that is tempting you to cause innocent blood to be shed, and urging you to procure my condemnation to an unjust and cruel fate. Pause ere too late. For Hilda's sake do not incur more sin—more vengeance!"

A shudder ran through him as she spoke—a struggle in his heart seemed to awake his frame. Perhaps it was his good and evil angels struggling for mastery.

One more chance was held out to him—one more warning vouchsafed to arrest his evil and selfish course; but in vain.

The lands of Rose Mount and Brierfield—the wealth that had already tempted him to so much injustice and crime still dazzled his vision. One more step and they would be his.

Madeline had disappeared; Rupert was powerless. The victim was in his power, and gold, and power, and influence would be at his command. Julius Andrews and his dark threats could be defied, and no sting would have terror for him more. The temptation was too strong, the alternative too dark and repelling, and the die was cast.

"You are extremely considerate, Gertrude, but I must do my duty, and take the chance of the rest. It was no fault of mine that Mr. Mugrave made a will that will oblige me to profit so largely by bringing justice to light."

He walked away as he spoke, striding far beyond her captors.

Gertrude, with a deep, foreboding sigh, resigned herself and those dear to her into the keeping of Him who will not permit the innocent to suffer or wrong to prosper without avenging it in His time.

"Young man, this is useless, weak, unmanly!" said Mr. Clinton as he re-entered the room where Rupert De Vere lay on the couch where he had thrown himself in a perfect paroxysm of grief, and remorse that his still-shattered frame was ill able to bear.

Rupert looked up fiercely.

"What does this intrusion mean?" he said, impatiently. "Am I not to be allowed even the relief of privacy? I am surely of age to command my own actions without reproach and control."

"You have scarcely shown that you are capable of using such freedom aright," replied the old man, calmly. "Even now the lesson appears lost on you. You have injured the trust and noblest creature that ever sacrificed all her very life for an ungrateful and blind object; you have brought her to the very depths of degradation, danger, and death. And now you turn on the only living being who can move any engines to interfere on your behalf or influence your future life."

"You? Are you speaking of yourself?" exclaimed the young man, glancing involuntarily round the humble apartment. "How can you save her? What power can you have?"

Mr. Clinton did not appear so much offended as might have been supposed by the implied taunt. He even assumed a more gentle tone when he again spoke, and his eyes had a more pitying softness in their keen depths.

"I am glad you are more occupied with her safety than your own condition, young man," he said, seating himself. "That is a more promising feature of a character that I feared till now partook almost entirely of the father's nature."

"My father! What do you know of him? This is the second time that allusion has been made to him by strangers," exclaimed the young man, passionately. "Mr. Clinton, you have been most kind to an unknown and troublesome guest. I owe you much more than I can repay; but if you can tell me of the father who has been held up to me only as a monster of iniquity, whose memory can but bring shame on his child, but of whom I literally know nothing, I will return you all, any service, any gratitude that is in my power to give to human being."

"You speak of 'memory.' Are you sure he is dead?" was the evasive reply.

"I was told so by one who is himself now with the dead," said Rupert, eagerly; "but I begin to doubt it from other hints that I have received. But it is idle to bandy such suppositions, Mr. Clinton, when I confess that in this matter I am totally in darkness. As you said but now, Gertrude Mugrave's fate is far more pressing than a secret that has been so many years a mystery. Save her, and I will wait—patiently wait."

"Would you give up all hope of ever learning it for her sake?" asked the old man, sharply.

"Yes; it is her right," replied Rupert. "I see no connection between the two," he added, more thoughtfully; "but, if you speak truly, if you can do aught for her, and, by any caprice, consider it as a fitting penance that I should remain in such ignorance, I am resigned. But it is a wild fancy; I cannot believe it. You were in this secluded cottage when the tragedy took place. What can you know of its author?"

"I do not pretend to such 'knowledge,'" said Mr. Clinton, calmly. "But I have an engine in my power that may force a powerful protection to come to Gertrude's aid. Still, it will be a doubtful result even then, and you yourself put the last rivet on that poor girl's chains by your evidence against her and your scornful repelling of the suspicions that rested equally on both."

"I cannot, I cannot—do not ask it. It would be terrible to perjure myself, to declare I am guilty of that murdered girl's blood," said the young man, shuddering.

"I do not require such crime. It would be but

adding to the foul catalogue," repeated his companion. "But I tell you again that the secret of your birth and your father's fate may be used as the price of that unhappy, innocent girl's rescue. Young man, tell me; do you love—do you feel grateful enough to her to sacrifice what might bring you a far different destiny for yourself? Suppose there were wealth and position awaiting you—would you sacrifice them for her who has risked her life and fame and ease for your sake?"

Rupert was silent for a brief moment; not from hesitation, but because he could not but doubt the power of one who seemed so humble and so helpless either to save or to destroy.

"As you will," he said, at length. "Mark me, Mr. Clinton, I am not to be trifled with, but if there is truth in your words, if you can possibly exercise any power over Gertrude Mugrave's fate, I place all in your hands. Do as you will; I cannot be more wretched than I am, whatever befalls. If she should die I solemnly swear I shall never know pleasure or peace were I the monarch of the Indies, and, if she should live, all I desire will be to win her pardon and justify her regard by the devotion of a life."

"It is well," said the old man, approvingly. "Mild you, my man, I can pledge myself to nothing, for the waves and the earthquakes of human passion are beyond the reckoning of a patriarch or a sage. But what man can do shall be attempted, and I do not wholly despair, for Heaven watches over its own even when mortals are helpless to aid. So much I will tell you of your father," he added, after a pause, "that he betrayed your mother when he found that she was not the heiress of the broad lands and wealth he had counted on, and when his wayward fancy lighted on another and a younger woman. But, in Heaven's sight, she was his wife. Fate came to separate him from her whom he would fain have brought in her place. Jealous rage and a violent death were the end of that unhallowed union. The bereaved and scorned father and husband roared and bellowed at the dearest loss which he had doubly secured to himself and doubly lost."

"Was there another?—was there a child of this second love? You speak of doubled ties?" asked Rupert, eagerly.

"Nay, I will tell you no more. I have said almost too much, but I desired to test the truth of your repentance by revealing this much of the real position you hold," was the reply. "Now, if you are true to her and yourself, I will lose no time in my work. The enemy is already formed in the field, and even now it may be too late. If Gertrude Mugrave suffer, may the vengeance of her innocent fate fall on the heads of her persecutors, and her blood cry to Heaven from the ground more loudly than the death which was but a venial crime in comparison with such a sacrifice."

Mr. Clinton rose and left the room, while Rupert quivered in his every nerve at the solemn denunciation which found but too sure an echo in his own conscience.

Gertrude Mugrave's death would be a more deliberate and cruel fate than the murder of her bride-elect cousin.

CHAPTER XLV.

Thou canst hear though from the wild,
Thou canst save amid despair;
Safe may we sleep beneath Thy care,
Though banished, outcast, and reviled.

THE fourteenth day after Madeline's accident came, and her fever and suffering were at their utmost height, and little hope could be entertained of the recovery of one so fragile and so heavily tried in mind and body as that young and lovely sufferer.

Each day Philip Dacre waxed more gloomy and pale, and each day the stern self-control that awaited the end ere he took the action that he had resolved on became more iron-like in its rigid, adamantine veil.

It was a momentary relief when he was alone by some chance with the unconscious, wailing girl, when he could indulge the full vent of his agony unseen by any evil eye, and pour out his heart's fulness to the deaf ear of her he loved.

"Madeline, my Madeline—all mine now," he would say, "mine in death—mine for the fulfilment of thy task, the revelation of the truth thou hast so unconsciously betrayed. My precious one—that snapt link which thou hast raved of in thy wanderings, shall be the cement of thy union with one who will be faithful to thee for life. No one shall take thy place, my Madeline; we are bound by that link of hearts which naught can sever, no not even death itself!"

"Link, link! what link?" murmured the suffering girl. "I never said it, never told it! I have sworn, you know, sworn, and it cannot be broken—that oath, though the chain was snapt, snapt in twain. Oh, mercy, mercy! 'Twas dreadful! Hilda, Hilda, why didst thou tempt thy fate?"

Philip listened in speechless agony to the unconscious mutterings, and a suspicion, oft cherished as oft dismissed, flashed again across his mind.

"Madeline, in pity, tell me! Say you did not do the deed! It was impossible, you, so young—so womanlike! Say you did not murder that poor girl!"

"Hush, hush," she replied, looking at him with one of the cunning glances of delirium or madness. "That is very wrong of you. As if I dare tell, when it is hidden in the deepest recess. No one can find it, and my oath is safe—safe!"

"Find what?" he said, softly, and, bending his head over the couch, he touched the fevered brow caressingly with his lips. "Do you mean the broken link from the chain, my darling? Fear not; I will guard you with my life; guilty or innocent you shall be sheltered in my bosom, my stricken, suffering, betrayed one."

A sharp cry escaped her.

"I did not tell—I did not tell. You cannot say so. Oh, where is it—where is it? Have you found it? But, it is nothing, nothing, unless I tell all—it will prove not half; it is of no avail, none."

"No, it was not you. Be at peace. I heard it, and shall find it without you, then you will be safe, my love," he said, soothingly.

"Leave her alone, unless you would kill her outright, young man," said a stern voice behind him, and, starting up, he saw a tall, haggard-looking woman, with dark, glittering eyes, and still coal black tresses, bearing a strange though indefinable likeness to Madeline Cleveland herself.

"Who are you? How dare you intrude here?" said Philip, sternly. "Where is Mrs. Nelson that you should be permitted any access to this young lady, her charge?"

"I have a better right here than Mrs. Nelson, or even you, Mr. Dacre," said the woman, calmly. "Had not illness chained me for long weeks to the house Madeline Cleveland would have had no other nurse, perhaps never have needed one."

"Who are you?—not her mother?" he faltered, his eyes resting on the gaunt figure, and strange attire, the weird aspect, and the time-stained hands of the stranger.

"No, do not fear. I was never blessed with husband or child," she replied, with a sarcastic smile. "Yet I have had the pains, and toil, and hardships of both. But the subject is not of me, Mr. Dacre, but of this poor child," she added, with a sudden change of manner. "Leave her in peace. What she says in her wanderings cannot avail, unless it be strengthened by more credible testimony than that of a delirious sufferer."

"Where is that to be had? How is the wretched mystery to be cleared up?" said Philip, passionately. "You seem to know me, you claim to have other knowledge. If you have sought in your power, if you are acquainted with the circumstances that veil this tragedy and cast a hideous shadow around all who are concerned in it, you cannot, you ought not to hold your peace. Look at this unfortunate lovely one on the verge of the grave. Think of the father whose heart broke in the struggle to bear and avenge his loss—think of the fugitive girl whose innocence I believe as my own—and on the despairing man whose whole life has been blighted by this terrible shadow on his name—then say whether you are not bound to reveal, if you know it, the mysterious secret of that night murder."

"You do not say aught of the principal person interested—he who should have been the bridegroom of the murdered girl," returned the woman, with the same bitter sarcasm in her tone. "Surely his feelings and his fate must have been as terribly crushed as any of those you mention."

Philip turned impatiently.

"Either you are but imperfectly informed, or you can have little sympathy with this poor, betrayed girl to speak thus. Whatever Aubrey Lestrangle may suffer it is but a poor and just retribution for the injury he has inflicted on this dear, precious girl."

There was a softening moisture in the woman's eye as she in her turn leaned over the couch and watched the now unconscious, flushed face of the sufferer, and marked her poor, bandaged hands, and the withered locks of her splendid shower of black satin hair.

"You are right, you are right, Mr. Dacre. When you know all you will find I am not so lost to justice and truth as you seem to think. But there must be time for all things, and if you are too impatient to hasten the end it may be that you will but accomplish a terrible miscarriage of the justice you demand. Leave Aubrey Lestrangle, and the guilty murderer of Hilda Murgave, whoever that may be, in the hands of the All-seeing. And for this poor child, do not harass her by the very whisper of what may but heighten the fever of her brain."

"Nay, it was but to save her from her own too

great faithfulness to her oath that I would have drawn from her the secret she but too well preserves," said Philip, with a strange submission to that singular woman's behest, that seemed to demand some apology at his hands. "It might be lost for ever otherwise."

"Then your mind may be at rest on that score. I know as much, perhaps more, than herself as to this veiled mystery that has baffled courts and counsel, and even the keen eyes of love itself."

"Then why not tell it? You are bound in law and honour, and justice—in Heaven's sight and that of man!" urged the young man.

"You speak to one who reckes little of anything save the task to which she has pledged herself," replied Robina Falco, for, as the reader has discovered, it was she who had thus stolen into the sick chamber. "I came from a clime where passion and love speak more loudly than reason or the jargon of religion or morality. Mark me, I believe that it will suit those motives to comply with your desire. Living or dying, I may probably see fit to clear up the secret of this poor girl's life. But, till then, you would not drag one word from me—no, not on the rack itself, so you would do needless and fatal violence in attempting any such compulsion."

"What has brought you here? What would you do now?" asked Philip, uneasily.

He liked not the presence of this meddling intruder, with her claims to right and knowledge, at Madeline's bedside.

"I came to fulfil a duty of love," she said. "Mrs. Nelson, the woman who has tended her thus far, nursed me in a long and dangerous illness, and it was but now that I learnt from her what enlightened me as to her patient's identity. And I shall aid her in her task, so long as the girl needs such services at our hands."

"I might well assume some voice in that matter," returned Philip, coldly. "Miss Cleveland's attendants are procured at my instance and responsibility, and I know nothing of you or your claims on her. You say you are not her mother."

"There are other relationships than those of parents," she said, "and Madeline Cleveland has my blood in her veins. But be content, Mr. Dacre. I am not so hard but that I can appreciate real honour and kindness to the helpless and the stricken. And I will not bar your access to the room, where you have purchased fully your right of entry."

Philip flushed. There was no escaping the penetrating keenness of this strange woman, with her weird, gipsy-like face and ways, nor could he resist one whom he believed to hold Madeline's fate and the revelation of that mysterious tragedy in her power.

"Be it so," he said, with a deep sigh. "If the physician is right, a brief space will end our anxious watch and settle the fate of many. And it is not in human—not in woman's nature to be wanting in love and service at such a time. Poor, injured, precious one!" he murmured, incoherently, turning to the mute sufferer, "thy death will be avenged, if it bring woe and gloom on my whole future life."

For a few moments his lips moved, though no sound came; his eyes were upturned—his hands clasped.

Was he offering up a prayer to Him who holds life and death in His hands?

Philip Dacre had attended church with decorum, he had joined outwardly in its services with other worshippers, but this was perhaps the first petition he had ever offered up from his inner heart to his Maker. And, whatever might be its result, such prayers are never altogether unheeded to those who address them in fervency and sincerity of heart.

"I shall return ere night," he said, turning to leave the room. "Mr. Page assured me there will be little change till then—perhaps not for another week, should that pass and her strength hold out."

He took one last, lingering look of the beloved features, glanced at Mrs. Nelson's sleeping figure in the sitting-room as a sort of security against the possibility of treachery, then hastily left the house.

It was a bleak January day. The snow was falling in thick flakes, but he scarcely heeded either the wind or the white shower in the air.

He was bent only on hurrying to his rarely visited chambers, to transact what needful business might be awaiting him ere he returned to the great magnet of his present life.

He hurriedly sprang up the stairs.

There was relief perhaps in violent and hasty movement to the fever of his mind, and he scarcely took the usual decorous time for any of the ordinary occupations of life in his present mood.

Had he been somewhat less hasty in his entrance he would have perceived the portly figure of his landlady toiling up the lower stairs in an anxious attempt to catch him in his progress.

But she might as well have attempted a race with a stag in her utmost powers of volition, and she retired to her own religious, muttering:

"Well, I suppose it don't matter. It's all right; he's a gentleman, and no mistake."

Meanwhile Philip had reached his room, and hastily opened the door, which he scarcely noticed to be unbolted—a rather unusual circumstance with his careful landlady.

A figure seated near the fire did, however, at once rivet his attention, and he started back with a cold, indignant surprise.

"Mr. Lestrangle, this is very unexpected, and, I must add, unwelcome," he said, haughtily.

"Oh, I do not doubt that in the least! And no wonder, when old friendship is betrayed for a treacherous love," returned Aubrey, bitterly. "Philip Dacre, where is Madeline? What is this tale of her being in your protection—of your only waiting for her recovery to openly exhibit such a disgraceful spectacle to the world as an actress and Mr. Dacre's—"

"Silence—for your life, Lestrangle!" thundered the stern voice of Philip Dacre, in tones that made even that insolent suitor quail. "If you have no remaining sense of shame—of remorse—at least, let fear keep you from farther outrage on one so deeply injured."

"Who in her turn is injuring me to the very quick," returned Aubrey, bitterly. "I offered her more than she had any right to expect, and what might have compromised me in my most vital interests, and now this is the result—that she villifies me and degrades herself by—"

"By what? false ingratitude that you are!" said Philip, mastering with strong effort his boiling rage. "By holding herself as pure and unstained before man as she is in the sight of Heaven—by concealing your iniquities—by earning her own livelihood at the cost of labour and hardship—and, now, the price of life itself."

Aubrey started at the words.

A strange look that his companion could not interpret came over his face.

"Of life!" he repeated, "Is that a flowery hyperbole, Mr. Dacre?"

"It is a terrible truth," replied Philip, hoarsely, "if that is any satisfaction for you. If you prefer the death to the supposed inconsistency of the woman you professed to love beyond even your plighted bride it is yours. Madeline Cleveland is, I believe, within a few hours of death, and you are in heart her murderer."

"Scoundrel!—how dare you utter that word?" cried Aubrey, springing, like a tiger, with sudden fury on the motionless, rigid form which stood coldly regarding him, and dealing a severe blow with the cane he held on Philip's shoulders.

Dacre was for a brief minute paralyzed by the attack. The next instant he had snatched the slight weapon from the assailant's hands, and, hurling it to the other end of the room, he seized Aubrey, like a child, in his strong grasp, and threw him from him with a swing of his powerful arm.

"Aubrey Lestrangle," he said, in a low voice of suppressed passion, "leave this room, lest I lose mastery of myself. Remember that pen dipped in Madeline's life-blood, which bound you to control your evil passions. Wait till she—the worn, unhappy one—has gone where nothing can disturb her more, then you shall not need to offer further insult, and I shall not be fettered from resenting it. Her life is your safety; you may well pray for its continuance. False, bad, cowardly assassin, that you are, of woman's fame and woman's life! Go, I tell you!—go!—as you value your life and my oath."

Aubrey quivered under the scorn of the intense threatening indignation of those low, hoarse words. He knew him who had been his friend; well he remembered the volcanic fires that slept beneath the ice of his outward demeanour, even as a boy. And he guessed, but too surely, that the storm he had raised would not be hastily quelled, nor powerless in its fury.

Slowly and noiselessly, creeping, like a detected rat, from the scene of his defeated attack, he stole from the room.

When Philip looked up from the cushion, where he had as it were choked his passion back by actual force, he was alone—the serpent had relieved him of its noisome presence.

But if Aubrey had left a sting behind, he carried a bitter pang gnawing at his own heart.

"Never safe; never safe!" he murmured as he walked through the silent gardens of the Temple. "Even her death will not remove all cause of fear. But when all is over, the guilt thoroughly proved, and the wealth mine, I can laugh at the impotent rage of that fellow, who is boiling with a first passion, like a man cutting his wisdom tooth. A few months abroad, and all would be right. Yes; all depends on getting this trial well over, then, with Madeline silenced for ever, and De Vere powerless, I may at last enjoy my hard-won gains. I wonder whether old Andrews

is here?" he added as he threaded the streets about Holborn till he at length arrived at Queen's Square, and passed into an hotel just adjoining that quiet locality.

He received an answer in the affirmative to his question respecting the money-lender's advent, and, in a few seconds, was ushered into a "private room" on the second floor, where the Shropshire man was engaged in discussing a savoury cutlet and a bottle of Amontillado sherry.

"Ha!—just in time! This is an uncommonly good glass of wine, I ordered the best, you see, as I knew you would wish me to make myself comfortable," said Julius, familiarly. "And money will be no object to the heir of Rose Mount and Brierfield."

Aubrey bowed coldly as he declined the obliging offer.

"Excuse me, Mr. Andrews—business is more to the purpose than drinking," he said, significantly. "And I came to learn what progress you have made since your arrival. Of course you have seen Mr. Thorne, and obtained his assistance?"

"I saw him yesterday, and a queer fish he is," was the reply. "At first I had no hope of getting him to say a word that could help me; and he looks like an old lunatic, who won't do much good, unless he is well primed, then he'll go up like a rocket, and spread fire and destruction around."

"But what does he say?—what did you accomplish?" said Aubrey, impatiently. "It matters nothing to me whether the man's a mummy or a fire-brand so long as he answers our purpose."

"I strongly hope it, Mr. Lestrangle. I felt my way, and soon found the tack that suited him best. I told him what despair Mr. De Vere was in, and all she had done for him, and that it only needed her acquittal to make it all right between them. And, when I saw he bit at the bait, I soon carried on the angling, and, in short, before I left him, he had turned literally livid with rage and revenge. 'It's enough; it's enough!' he said, in a promising tone of hoarse rage. 'She shall never be that man's wife. If I weep tears of blood, I'll see her rather in her grave than at the altar.'"

"Mind you, that was an 'aside,' but my ears are sharp enough to catch what's not always meant for them. And, when he agreed to give his evidence, I quietly accepted it, as if all was in the ordinary course."

"Do you think he's safe now?" said Aubrey. "And for the rest tell me what you believe, Andrews, in your inmost heart as to our success. Mind you, it's no use living in false security. I have ventured all on this trial, and I shall not go back. But you are the only living man to whom I can speak, on whom I can rely. The magnitude of the stake is frightful when my existence hangs on the result."

Julius drank another glass of wine ere he replied: "Take my word for it, Mr. Lestrangle, we're all right. Every proof is against her, and Mr. De Vere himself has driven in a stake that will help the edifice. There may be pity for her, but then there'll be more for the poor young lady who was murdered, and, when the worst comes to the worst, she will certainly be sentenced for life, if she should escape hanging, which is very probable. So you may make yourself quite happy, and arrange your preparations to assume the post of lord and master of the Murgave estates before Easter, or I'm no lawyer. And of course our arrangement will hold good in such a case. 'The Larches' will be as great an estate to my humble self as all the wide lands at stake will be to you, Mr. Lestrangle."

"Certainly, and even more than that!" exclaimed the young man, eagerly. "The diamonds, and many a little perquisite besides, shall prove my gratitude, Andrews, if you can carry this successfully through. And, of course, he added, doubtfully, "there can be no odium attached to my attempting to carry out justice."

"Certainly not, certainly not, Mr. Lestrangle. The intended bridegroom of the poor, lamented young lady must be very naturally the most interested in avenging her death. And—hard as I may be, and without any pretence at anything but self-interest in acquiring the wealth I love—I will honestly confess that I should feel no pity for her, and that I would give something of my own gains to bring about the punishment of so foul, and cruel, and dastardly a crime."

(To be continued.)

A WORD TO MOTHERS.—Why will not mothers know that to invite and possess the confidence of their daughters is to secure them from evil? Never make them afraid to tell you anything; never make them ashamed of the natural desire to have attention from the other sex. Admit the liking for it as belonging to youth—to your past youth—but at the same time enforce the judicious timing of it; and, above

all, encourage a frank avowal of, and sympathy with, their youthful preferences. Many a young girl now lost to herself and society might have been saved by such a course. Harsh rebuke of these natural feelings is like pruning all the leaves and buds and blossoms from a young plant, lest stray insects should alight upon it.—F. F.

MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT'S the matter, Alice?" Polly asked. "Where's your mother?"

"Mother's gone to Speckhaven, father's out attending to his business, and Billy's off a-fishing, and here's a message from father that Billy's to go up to the Priory as fast as he can. There's a sort of water party, and they want him to row one of the boats."

Miss Mason pricked up her ears. A water party!—this was why Mr. Fane had not put in an appearance that morning. Why had he told her nothing of this?

"Mr. Francis and Mr. Guy can row, but that artist gentleman—you know him, Polly—cannot, and Billy's to row his boat. Whatever shall I do?"

A sudden inspiration flashed across Polly's mind—across that speaking face of hers. She could row.

An intense curiosity possessed her to see how Mr. Fane conducted himself in the society of Miss Hanton.

He had told her yesterday, in the plainest terms, that the Honourable Diana was nothing—less than nothing to him.

Here was a chance to prove his truth or falsehood. Alice read her mischievous design in her face, and clasped her hands.

"Oh, Polly, don't!" she cried, aghast.

Only six weeks before Polly had brought up some walnut-juice and hair-dye from among Duke's theatrical properties, and arrayed herself in Billy's garments, and stepped down to call upon Rosanna, and actually sat and chatted with that lady fully twenty minutes without her discovering how shamefully she was being imposed upon.

Polly's saucy face was full of laughing, roguish, reckless delight now at the prospect of fun.

"Don't, Polly," pleaded Alice; "only think if you should be found out."

"I shall," said Polly.

And her friend knew that "I shall" was as unalterable as the laws of the Medes.

"And I won't be found out. If I should be discovered it isn't a hanging matter. I'll go and row the gentleman who can't row himself. Get the walnut-juice and hair-wash, and Billy's Sunday suit, Alice."

Dear, fair, sensitive reader, you are shocked, I am sure, but please remember this shocking little madcap was only sixteen, as full of frolic as a kitten, and even you, perhaps, were not as wise at sixteen as you are now.

She acted on impulse—all the evil and misery of the girl's after-life came from that—she acted on impulse, she never paused to think.

There had gone into the bailiff's house a pretty, fair-haired girl—there came out a swarthy-skinned, black-haired lad, whose straw hat was very much slouched over his eyes, whose hands were thrust deep in his jacket-pockets, and he walked along with your true boy's swagger.

Alice looked after Polly in laughing wonder, not unmixed with dismay.

"Her own mother would not know her," the bailiff's daughter thought; "but, good gracious! if she should be discovered."

This dusky boy, who might have served as a model for Murillo, had that immortal been alive, sped along at a swinging pace. Half a mile on he came face to face with Matthew Warren himself.

"You Billy! you hurry!" called the parent, gruffly. He recognized the hat and jacket, and took it for granted that the wearer was his offspring. "Cut across them meadows now, and down to the lake, like fun. The gentry's waiting."

The lad bounded across the meadows, every pulse tingling with excitement and the fun of the thing.

As to the impropriety—well, did not Viola, in the garb of a page, follow her knight to the wars? and did not Helen Mar, in male attire, penetrate to the prison of her Scottish chief; and was not Helen Mar but one remove from an angel?

If pages' costume had been the correct thing for ladies a few hundred years ago, where was the great harm now for her to appear in Billy's habiliments?

Amid the wooded slopes of the great park lay the mere, or lake—a broad, deep sheet of water, embosomed in wooded heights, with two small islands

nestling like emeralds on its shining breast. These islands were famous picnic places, and the present destination of the party.

There were three boats.

As Polly sprang lightly down the green slope she took in the whole scene.

There was Mr. Francis already launched in his white skiff, with Lady Charteris and a Miss Mortimer, a near neighbour; there was Mr. Guy, with Miss Mand Charteris, and two other young ladies in sky-blue muslin; and there was Mr. Allan Fane, standing beside Miss Hanton, and looking helplessly at his "boat upon the shore."

Why had he never learned to row? Would that bailiff's boy never come?

For, if one may venture to use such an expression with regard to so high-born a lady, Miss Hanton was in the sulks.

Had not Francis Earls court "chaffed" Mr. Fane in her presence concerning his rustic inamorata, and, though the Honourable Diana was disdainfully uplifted and indifferent to such people, she had felt a sharp pang of anger and jealousy. Just now she was haughty, frigid, and all Mr. Fane's efforts up to this moment had failed to melt her.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed, "here's that boy at last. You're sure you can row, my lad?"

"Quite sure, sir."

How the lad's heart was throbbing under Billy's best waistcoat! but the slouched hat hid the eyes that flashed so wickedly.

"Permit me to assist you, Miss Hanton," said the artist.

The gentleman spread wraps, and helped his scornful, silent liege lady into the boat with tenderest care. "Shall we go in search of those water-lilies you spoke of some time since, my dear Miss Hanton?"

"As you please," Miss Hanton answered, politely, struggling with a yawn; "as well one place as another."

The three thousand a year seemed melting away like morning mist.

The young man grew alarmed, he might be in love with a dozen village girls, but when it came to marriage Miss Hanton was the lady. His attentions redoubled, his voice took a pathetically tender accent, his looks might have gone to a heart of flint.

Ah! Polly knew these very looks well—they were his stock in trade, given to all alike. He had told her falsehoods then, he was the suitor of this middle-aged heiress.

A red, angry glow began to burn under the walnut-dyed skin.

Miss Hanton gradually deigned to relax.

The afternoon was hot, the sunshine glorious, no one could be very frigid long in such a tropical temperature. The patrician face under the white parasol relented into a smile at some especially gallant whisper of the gentleman.

"Bah!" she said; "how much of all that is real, Mr. Fane? Does your little farmyard nymph appreciate your fine speeches I wonder?"

She could not for her life help saying it, yet she hated herself for letting him see she cared enough for him to be jealous.

Mr. Fane's face lighted perceptibly.

"What!" he said, with his frankest laugh, "little Polly! My dear Miss Hanton, she is only a handsome child, a picturesque model, with tawny hair, and melting blue eyes—a model for Grenze. I have set my heart on making the 'Rosamond and Eleanor' a success, and hers is just the face I want for my Rosamond. Who would make speeches, as you call them, to a little rustic school girl? What I say to you—Diana!—a pause before the name, and a look! 'I mean!'"

"If you want water-lilies hadn't I better take you there?" called the voice of the boy at this juncture; "they're thick there, I know."

He pointed to the smaller island of the two—the other boats were making for the larger.

Under the straw hat how two bright eyes were flashing.

"Very well," the lady said, more and more gracious, "let us go there then."

"Billy" rowed with vicious energy—full of thoughts of vengeance. "A rustic school girl"—a "picturesque model" indeed!

Perhaps before the day was ended she would teach this matchless deceiver she was something more.

The smaller island, "Lily Island" it was called, was about ten minutes' walk in circumference, and two hundred yards distant either from the shore or the other island.

Polly knew this, also that Mr. Fane could no more swim than row, and a revengeful resolution came into her wicked, plotting little head.

"I'll give you plenty of time to make love and propose," Mr. Allan Fane, she thought as she ran her skiff ashore and leaped out.

Mr. Fane carefully assisted his lady. Was the boy sure the grass was not damp—that the ground was not marshy?

Yes, the boy was positive on these points, and led the way to where the lilies grew—at a point directly opposite the landing, with pollard willows and alders growing thick between.

"Go back to your boat and wait for us, my lad," Mr. Fane said; "we will return in an hour or so."

"Will you?" thought the youth addressed; "that remains to be seen."

The artist made a seat for the heiress, and began filling a small basket, brought for the purpose, with lilies and wild red berries.

He did not mean to propose just yet—he rather shrank from that ultimatum, and wished to postpone riveting his fetters as long as possible, but otherwise he was all that the most exacting lady-love could desire.

Yards and yards away over the shining lake the boy and the boat had gone.

Gone! Polly rowed straight to the shore, moored the boat, and, with one vindictive, backward look at the distant green speck, went coolly on her homeward way.

"He can't swim, and they won't hear him if he should call out," thought the avenger. "When they see the boat here they'll think he and Miss Haulton have returned, and won't miss them for some hours. There's to be a dinner party to-night, and I rather think two of the guests will be late."

Polly returned to the balliff's, doffed Billy's clothes, washed away the dye and walnut juice, and went home.

Rosanna wondered at her variable mood for the rest of that day; sometimes all aglow with inward wrath, and again bursting into inextinguishable fits of laughter.

"Wrecked on a desert island," Polly thought. "I wonder how they find themselves by this time."

How indeed? The lilies were gathered; the lady and gentleman had had a very pleasant *été-à-été*; the sun was dropping low, and Miss Haulton looked at her watch.

Half-past five, and they dined at seven; quite time to go home and dress. She took her escort's proffered arm, and went across the island to the boat.

To the boat indeed! The boat was gone! The deserted pair looked blankly around.

"What does this mean?" Mr. Fane asked. "Whither can that little rascal have gone?"

He left the lady and went round the island. All in vain; no trace of the boy or the boat remained. He ascended the highest point of the island, and looked across to the shore; yes, there moored together were the three boats.

The whole party had returned; the diabolical urchin had got tired of waiting and gone off; they were quite alone—not a soul to be seen.

The truth burst upon Allan Fane, and the imprecations, not loud but deep, that followed would have astonished Miss Haulton could she have heard them. She said nothing when the truth was broken to her, but a flush of intolerable annoyance and mortification crimsoned her pale face.

To be the subject of a jest, a source of ridicule and laughter, was beyond all things a horror to this lady's pride; and would not this story—this being deserted on an island with Allan Fane—serve to keep her friends in merriment for months to come?

"What is to be done?" she asked, at length, trying to repress her intense anger and mortification.

Mr. Fane did not know; he was out of his depth altogether.

He tried shouting until he was hoarse; all in vain—there was none to hear.

The sun went down, flushing sky and lake with red light, and the moments wore on, and with each Miss Haulton's trouble deepened. Great Heaven, she thought, if she should be obliged to pass the night here!

The moments, the hours passed—it was past eight. The evening wind arose, chill from the far-off German Ocean, the warm, red glow died out of the sky; it turned cold and gray. A ripple darkened the glassy surface of the lake, and a creeping fog was rising.

Diana Haulton covered her face with both hands, and burst into tears of rage and shame and fear. But relief was at hand, sent by the wicked plotter herself. Billy—the real Billy—despatched with a bribe, and a promise of inviolable secrecy, launched one of the skiffs, and reached the island just as the darkness of night was wrapping sea and land.

Mr. Fane sprang upon him, exclaiming: "You infernal young rascal! Why did you play as this trick?"

Billy wriggled himself free, and looked up with a face of injured innocence.

"Let me go. I didn't play you no trick. I ain't been here to-day before."

Looking closely at him, Allan Fane knew he had not. Then there dawned upon him a thought, a wild idea, but a true one. He said not a word. He helped Miss Haulton in quite meekly, and did not speak five words all the way home.

As for Polly, she laid her head upon her pillow that night with the virtuous pride of one who has brought the wicked to righteous retribution, and heaped coals of fire upon the head of the deceiver and slanderer.

CHAPTER XX.

"Duchess," Mr. Mason said, the following morning, as he arose from the breakfast table, "when you've quite finished and got the dishes washed I wish you would step up to my room before you go anywhere. I have a proposal to make to you."

"Oh!" said the Duchess, "a proposal of marriage, Duke?"

Paying no attention to this flippant inquiry, the scene-painter went on his way upstairs to his own peculiar sanctum. He was unusually grave and thoughtful this morning, as Polly might have noticed had she not been in a rather spiritless state herself. The reaction that always follows excitement had set in, and though she had raged and laughed alternately yesterday, this morning she was as dull as Miss Haulton had called her. She did not even wonder how they felt after yesterday's adventure on the island. Why should she trouble herself to think of them? The heiress despised her, had called her ignominious names, and Mr. Fane was amusing himself with her rustic simplicity, and laughing in his sleeve at the effect of his pretty speeches.

"Only a handsome model," indeed! How glad she was she had never given him even one sitting for the Fair Rosamond.

The breakfast service cleared away and the little dining-room tidied, she went upstairs wearily to the painting-room. The perennial dabs of black were on the pretty face and hands, and she looked pale and listless. She found the scene-painter not yet at work, but sitting before a small shaving-glass contemplatively rubbing the stubble on his chin.

"I wonder if I could postpone it till to-morrow," he said as she entered. "Shaving makes a man look cleaner, no doubt, but it's an awful bother. Do you think the bristles would be too strong if I waited another day, Duchess?"

"Mr. Mason, was that what you requested me to come up here to decide?"

"No, Duchess, don't be in a hurry!"

Duke turned from the glass, and, leaning forward, looked at her. How pale she was in the garish morning light—how dull the brilliant eyes—almost as dull as Miss Haulton's own.

"Duchess, what's the matter? You're getting thin. You're losing your appetite—you took only two cups of tea this morning and three rolls."

"Do you usually count my cups of tea and the number of rolls, sir?" cried Polly, firing up, for her powerful school-girl appetite, so unlike that of her ideal heroine, was rather a sore point with this young lady.

"You're getting thinner and pale, you're losing your good looks, Miss Mason. You want a change, and you shall have it. Duchess, you shall go to boarding-school!"

"To boarding-school, Duke?"

"To boarding-school, Duchess."

The girl's face flushed, then paled; she walked to the window, and looked silently down the quiet road.

To boarding-school! Why, it had been the dream of her life to go to school hitherto, but Duke clung to her bright presence with an almost selfish love, and could not bear to part with her.

Now her dream was realized, she was to go, and her first sensation was one of blank dismay.

Her silence, her rigid attitude, frightened her guardian. It had not been Lady Charteris's words altogether which had determined him upon his step, it had been the attentions of Mr. Allan Fane and Polly's evident pleasure in them. To him there was something almost like sacrilege—like a desecration of holy childhood—in a strange young man talking of love to his little sixteen-year-old child.

He would quietly and at once remove her from danger. And now she stood here pale—silent—and could it be that he was too late and the mischief done?

"Duchess—Polly!" he exclaimed, in a frightened voice, "you always wanted to go. Don't tell me you are going to object now!"

She turned from the window and the smile he loved lit up her face.

"No, Duke, I'm not going to object. I'll go with all the pleasure in life. I need school of some kind, goodness knows—such an ignorant, wild, good-for-nothing being as I am. Where am I to go?"

"To Brompton—to Miss Primrose's establishment."

Squire Weldon's daughter went there, you know. I'll take you next week if you think you can be ready."

"That's a question for Rosanna. I can be ready fast enough if my clothes can. Can you afford it, Duke? It will cost a dreadful sum, won't it?"

"You have your own private fortune, Miss Mason," responded Duke, gravely; "it shall come out of that. Out of seven hundred you can spare two for your education, I should hope; then when you can play the piano and work Berlin-wool pincushions, and are five-and-twenty years old, we will marry you to some sensible, middle-aged professional man—say a lawyer or a doctor," concluded Duke, with a glacial attempt at a jest.

Polly frowned and turned to leave the room.

"I hate sensible men—I abhor middle-aged lawyers and doctors, and I shall never marry—never! I'll be an old maid like Rosanna; and if Mr. Hawksley should ever return from those savage lands where they dig gold out of the ground as people here do turnips, I'll keep his house for him if he will let me. Now, as I've got to go into town for Rosanna, I'll bid you good morning, if you've quite done with me."

Polly departed, dressed herself mechanically, and went on Rosanna's commission. The bright sunshine, the fresh air blew away the vapours of the morning, and before she had been fifteen minutes abroad Polly was herself again. Her step grew elastic, her eyes bright, her cheeks rosy, her smile radiant. Go to school! of course she would, and study hard too, and come home accomplished, a piano-playing, fire-screen-making, Italian-singing, crayon-drawing, perfectly finished young lady. Neither Miss Haulton nor any one else should call her an ignorant rustic again!

It was late in the afternoon when she reached home, and the first person she beheld as she neared the cottage was Mr. Allan Fane. She had spent the whole morning in Speckhaven—dining with a friend there—and now as the western sky was reddening she sauntered homeward, trilling a song in very gladness of heart. It was her favourite ballad of "County Guy," and it was of Guy Earlscourt she was thinking as she sang. He reminded her of the heroes of her books with his dark, handsome face, his large Italian eyes, with that sleepy golden light in their dusky depths, and his smile that neither his brother nor Mr. Allan Fane could rival. She was heart-whole where the artist was concerned, in spite of her pique and mortified vanity—a very child playing at being in love. There was all a child's audacity in the saucy smile, and glance, and greeting she gave him now.

Allan Fane had been a little doubtful about his reception—ever so little uneasy. A conviction that it was this mischievous sprite who had left him on the island to punish him for his deception had stolen upon him. As he met that brightly defiant, saucy glance he felt certain of it. She looked like a boy at that moment, a bowitchingly pretty boy, and the blue GRENZE eyes flashed with the wickedest fire he had ever seen in them. How pretty she was! how pretty! how pretty! He was an artist, remember, and an adorer of beauty in all things. She wore the "serviceable drab silk," but she had adorned herself with knots of cherry-coloured ribbon, and her head, with its yellow curls, was bare to the red sunshine. She was swinging her hat by its strings, as she had a habit of doing, altogether heedless of tan, freckles, or sunburn.

"How do you do, Mr. Fane?" Polly said, with that rippling smile; "I hear you had a delightful water-party to Lily Island yesterday. I do hope, now, you didn't tire yourself too much with rowing in the hot sun. It's lovely on Lily Island, isn't it?"

She was quite reckless whether he knew of her masquerade or not. What was lie to her?—what was she to him? Only a "picturesque model!"

"I can't row, Miss Mason, as you very well know, neither can I swim. As you are strong be merciful. Do I need to tell you of the melancholy accident that befell me yesterday—that the wicked little Charon who rowed our boat left Miss Diana Haulton and myself on that confounded little two-penny-half-penny island; that Miss Haulton wept with anger and vexation; that the sun set, and the fog rose, and it was half-past nine at night before, sadder, wiser, wetter, colder, we reached the Priory? Ah, Miss Mason! even you I think might have pitied as if you had beheld our forlorn condition!"

Polly shrugged her shoulders disdainfully.

"I pity no one who is deservedly punished. It was only just retribution for something said or done. I am quite certain Charon knew what he was about, and served you right. What an excellent opportunity it afforded you, Mr. Fane, of turning knight-errant, succouring beauty in distress. I think you should feel grateful for having been left."

"Knight-errantry went out of fashion with Don Quixote; and succouring beauty in distress—beauty being exemplified by Miss Haulton—is a rôle I shouldn't care to undertake. Under certain circum-

stances," he added, with his eyes fixed on the face before him, "I can fancy a lifetime spent even on Lily Island might be pleasant."

But the same look given to her now had been bestowed upon another yesterday, and she met it with a ringing laugh:

"Don't you think, under all the circumstances, Mr. Fane, that you would row over to the main land after twelve hours or so for the vulgar bread and butter of every-day life, finding love and lilies pall a little? No, I forget, you can't row. Take lessons, sir, before you join a water-party again."

"I will take lessons in anything, Miss Mason, if you will teach me."

His face flushed, his eyes sparkled, he came a step nearer. There was something in her manner to-day that made her a hundred-fold more bewitching than ever—a sort of reckless defiance, that lit her face with a new, bright beauty.

"I have better use for my time, sir. Instead of teaching, I am going to be taught myself. I am going away to school."

"Going away to school?" he repeated. The girl laughed.

Coquetry comes naturally to most pretty women, and Polly was a coquette born. Somehow to-day she felt as though she were vastly above this young man—older, wiser—his superior.

"If I had said 'going to Nowgate' you could not look more blank. Yes, Mr. Fane, I am going away—going to school in London—no, Brompton—for the next two or three years."

"Two or three years!"

He did look blank. The possibility of her going away had never occurred to him. He had not given the matter much thought, but it had seemed to him that the bright summer months would go on like this, in pleasant interviews and delightful sittings for his picture.

Certainly the time would come when he must leave this girl with the tawny hair and sapphire eyes, but the end had only been glanced at afar off, and between lay a golden mist of long, delicious days and weeks.

Now she was going away, and there broke upon Allan Fane the truth—that he was in love, not merely smitten, but in love with a slim, untutored little girl, with the manners, when she chose, of a princess, and the beauty of an embryo goddess.

For the first time in his life, after ten-score flirtations, Allan Fane was in love!

He was white as a sheet; his eyes, his voice, his careless attitude changed in a moment. The girl saw it with wonder and delight.

"Yes," she pursued, mercilessly, "I am going away in a few days—as soon as ever my things can be got ready—and I am eager to be gone. Don't you think I need it, Mr. Fane? Even 'a picturesque model' is the better for knowing the nine parts of speech, and how to spell words of three syllables. When you and Miss Hutton go to St. George's, Hanover Square, please send me the *Morning Post* containing all the particulars—that is, if you haven't forgotten my very existence long before that time."

"I shall never forget you."

He spoke the truth. Allan Fane never did forget her.

That hour came back to him years after with something of the pang he felt then. Weak, selfish he might be, and was, but the pain of loss was there, and as bitter as though he had been a stronger and worthier man.

That hour came back many times in his after-life, and he saw little Polly Mason again with the red light of the sunset on her sparkling face, and the gleams of scornful humour in her flashing eyes.

"You will never forget me!" she repeated, with another laugh, that had yet a tone of bitterness in it; "no, I suppose the memory of the little picturesque model with the tawny hair, and the blue Grenze eyes, may serve to amuse you and Miss Hutton for some time to come. Pray don't speak in a hurry, Mr. Fane, as I see you are about to do. Who would make speeches to a little rustic school girl? What you say to—Diana—you mean."

She had remembered his very words, and could launch them back now with telling reprisal. He caught her hand before she was aware, and held it fast.

"I knew it was you, Polly!" he exclaimed; "oh, wicked fairy! to come in disguise, and overhear my meaningless words. Don't you know that in society we may pay such compliments, and make empty speeches to ladies, who take them as matters of course, and never think of them twice. I don't care for Diana Hutton—I swear to you, Polly—I don't."

"No!" Polly said, coldly—proudly—and trying to withdraw her hand. "I dare say you don't care for her, but you are going to marry her all the same. Please let go my hand, Mr. Fane; they will see you from the house."

"What do I care if they do? what do I care if all the world sees me?" He was quite carried away now by excitement, and his face was flushed, eager. "Forgive me, Miss Mason—Polly—if anything I inadvertently said has wounded you. Believe me I would offend a hundred Miss Huttons sooner than lose your good opinion."

"My good opinion can affect you neither one way nor the other. You are a gentleman, I am—"

"A lady, by Heaven, if I ever saw one!"

"An ignorant country girl," Polly went on, a tremor now in her clear tones, and she looked far away at the crimson West; "not so ignorant, though, as to be deceived by looks and words from you. Our paths lie apart—let us say good-bye, and meet no more."

"Polly! what a cruel speech!"

"A sensible one, Mr. Fane. Let me go, pray. See! you have dropped something from your pocket."

It was a tiny morocco casket, which lay at his feet. He picked it up, opened it and took out a ring that blazed in the sunshine. It was a cluster-diamond. The next instant he had repossessed himself of Polly's hand, and the shining circlet shone on one slim finger.

He lifted the hand to his lips and kissed it passionately—for the first—the last time!

"Wear it, Polly, for I love you!"

Alas! for man's truth! A fortnight ago that ring had been ordered of a London jeweller to fit the finger of Diana Hutton. He meant to propose down in Lincolnshire, and this was to be the pledge of the betrothal. Only an hour ago the London express had brought it, and here it glittered on the finger of Polly Mason!

Heaven knows what else he might have said, what words, what promises, might have been exchanged; Polly might have become Mrs. Allan Fane, perhaps, and this story would then have never been written, for the great romance of this young woman's life has yet to be narrated, but at this instant—sent there by her guardian angel, no doubt—there appeared upon the scene the gaunt form of Rosanna, summoning sharply her youthful charge in to tea.

She tendered no invitation to the gentleman. She scowled upon him, indeed, as this exemplary lady could scowl.

Polly in love, indeed! Polly!—who had taken her doll to bed yesterday, as it were, and sang it to sleep!

Mr. Fane lifted his hat and departed at once. The girl would not look at him. She could not meet the glance in his eyes. Her face was burning; her heart thrilling. She hid the hand that wore the ring, and followed Rosanna meekly into the house. On the stairs she met Duke, and he, as gravely as in the morning, summoned her into his own room. Miss Mason felt she was in for it.

"I wouldn't let that young man dangle after me too much, if I were you, Duchess," he began. "He isn't what he pretends to be; he's a humbug, you'll find; a false, fickle, mean humbug! His father's a very honest man, and a good tailor—a bit of a screw, though—but—"

"Duke!" Polly cried, with indignant scorn. "A tailor?"

The young lady said it in much the same tone you or I might exclaim "A demon?"

"Yes, Duchess, a tailor. I've bought clothes at the shop in Bond Street many a time, and have seen Mr. Allan Fane when he was a pale-faced little shaver in pinafores. He doesn't remember me, of course, and I don't care about renewing the acquaintance. He's a tailor's son, sure enough, and I daresay it's the only thing about him not to his discredit."

It was very unusual for Duke to be bitter, or say cruel things of the absent, but he felt terribly sore on the subject of this dandified artist, with his shiny boots and swell hat, and white hands, and soft voice, making love to his little Polly.

"He's a humbug, Duchess, and he's trying to get that middle-aged Miss Hutton to marry him. She's rich and high born, and he's only an adventurer, with a good address and a university education. Don't take his pretty books, or drawings, or sit for him as a model, or have anything to say to him—that's a good girl, Duchess."

"Have you anything more to say, Duke?" Polly asked, quite meekly.

She felt somehow that what Duke said was true, but still—she looked at her ring, and her heart thrilled as she remembered his words—words so sweet to every girl's ear and heart—"I love you!"

Meantime Mr. Allan Fane walked home, and on the way found out he had acted like a lunatic. What had he done? Given up all the hopes of his life for a pretty face with blue eyes. Very good and pleasant things they were in their way, but not available as ready cash—not to be exchanged for good dinners, horses, opera boxes, and a house in May Fair.

What had he done? Dire alarm filled him as he walked along; he audibly repeated of his folly and

precipitancy with a fervour good to hear. Was it, after all, too late yet? He had not asked Polly Mason to be his wife.

He found Miss Hutton walking wearily round and round the great fish-pond, and joined her at once.

Miss Hutton, like Miss Mason, informed him she was going away.

"Montalieu bores me, I find," the lady said, carelessly; "more this year even than usual. The Duchess of Clanronald is going to the Italian lakes, and urges me to—"

A dreary yawn finished the sentence.

The Duchess of Clanronald!

Her grace of Clanronald had a nephew—rather an impoverished nephew—who had made hard running last year for the Hutton stakes. No doubt he would go to the Italian lakes too.

The thought flashed rapidly through the mind of the artist. Starry blue eyes, a witching gipsy face, a supple form, and sixteen sunny years are very well, if set off with diamonds and gilded with refined gold, but he couldn't marry Polly Mason; he couldn't turn itinerant portrait painter in this dull town, and merge his bright, individual star of self into a shabby-hatted, ratepaying, tax-fearing, cradle-rocking, family man.

It was written—it was his fate—he must marry a rich wife; so alas for Polly!

Before Miss Hutton's yawn was quite ended he had poured forth the tale of his long admiration, and implored her to be his wife!

The rosy light of the sun went down, and Diana Hutton lingered by the fish-pond with her accepted lover.

Her accepted lover!

He was pale and cold, and something inside his breast that did duty for a heart lay like a stone, but he lifted one of the Honourable Diana's cold hands to his lips and kissed it. Cool as that hand was the touch of his lips seemed to chill it.

She looked at him, and wondered at his pallor; but of course he was agitated—he loved her so, and had dreaded a refusal.

They entered the house together, betrothed—a satisfied smile on Miss Hutton's lips. She liked him very much; he was handsome, and would make her a devoted husband. No ring glittered on her finger; that would be remedied speedily, Mr. Fane whispered.

Three miles off a young girl—younger, fairer than the Honourable Diana Hutton—stood watching that rosy light in the sky as it sparkled and flickered on the diamond circlet on her finger; and the happy glow was in her eyes, the happy smile still lingered on her face when all the sky was dark.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was the third day after Polly Mason stood at the parlour window, looking listlessly enough up and down the deserted country road. There was little to be seen; there were few abroad. The fine June weather, that had lasted steadily for more than a fortnight, had broken up—yesterday it had rained all day and all night. To-day it had ceased, but still a sullen, leaden sky frowned darkly on a sodden earth and muddy roads and lanes. A weak, complaining wind waivered up from the sea to the young girl at the window; all seemed the very abomination of desolation.

Within doors things were in harmony with the weather. Rosanna was laid up with toothache, Duke had quarrelled with his employers, and was out of spirits, and Allan Fane had not once been near the cottage since.

There are times in our lives when everything goes wrong—days that are cold and dark and dreary, when there seems neither joy on earth nor hope in heaven.

Allan Fane had not been near the cottage since; that was the blank thought uppermost in the girl's mind as she stood there.

"He will be here to-day," had been her first thought on the morning after he had given her the ring, and her eyes and face had glowed with such a new baptism of beauty all day that Duke and Rosanna had looked at her in wonder, and felt inclined to be resentful that the thought of leaving them and going to school should produce such rapture.

A fever of restlessness had held her all that day and the next—a fever that burned in her eyes and on her cheeks, and took away appetite and rest. But he did not come.

Another day, another night, his ring still flashed upon her finger, his words still rang in her ears, his kiss still burned on the hand that wore the diamond, but he came not. What did it mean? Was he ill? Had he gone away suddenly? why did he not come?

Another time she would have put on her hat and gone up to the bailiff's house; she would be sure of ascertaining there. But a new, strange timidity had

taken possession of Polly. She did not care to stir out, even to go shopping with Rosanna for her new clothes—heavenly occupation at any other time. She wandered about the house—no flying footsteps, no trills of song, no banging of doors, no breezy rushing up and down stairs all day long. The restless fervour held her, but she said nothing, only waited, strangely quiet and docile.

On the third day reaction and lassitude followed. Rosanna was cross with toothache; Polly worked about and listened to her dreary complainings as she listened to the sobbing rain and wind.

A presentiment of evil took possession of her; she felt that in the very hour he had told her he loved her Allan Fane had deserted her for ever!

She did not love him—no, the surface of the lake is rippled by many a passing breeze, but the storm that stirs it to its very depths comes but rarely.

She did not love him, save as she loved Ivanhoe, Clive Newcombe and Co.

He was the hero of one of her pet stories—stepped out of the leaves into real life—the first well-dressed, good-looking, good-mannered young man who had paid her attention.

Polly wanted to be a lady; he could make her that—he, a gentleman who had taken his degree at Oxford, the friend and guest of Lord Montalien. Had he been faithful her whole heart might have gone out to him—such a great, loyal, loving heart as she could have given!

But it was her girl's vanity that bled now—her woman's pride that was up in arms. He had taken her fancy—not for one second her heart—but the pang of loss and cruel humiliation was there all the same!

She had been deceived, and she was intensely proud, and felt her wound bitterly.

She turned wearily away from the window at a call from Rosanna for cotton-wool for that jumping toothache.

"If it doesn't hold up in an hour," she said, with a vengeful glare, "I'll go straight into Speckhaven and have it out; I'm not going to be made miserable by a double tooth. Polly, there's a knock at the door."

Polly's heart gave a leap. At last surely this was he! She stood stock still, with the cotton-wool in her hand.

Duke came out of the painting-room in his shirt sleeves and opened the house door.

A portly lady in a black silk dress stood there, a comfortable-looking basket in her hand—no less a lady than Mrs. Hamper, the housekeeper at the Priory.

Mrs. Hamper, as a visitor of distinction, was ushered into the parlour, whither Rosanna and Polly followed.

Mrs. Hamper might not be the rose, but she dwelt near that splendid flower; she was not Allan Fane, but she brought news of him no doubt.

She would know now whether he was ill or false; and Polly sank down on a low chair, and leaned her head in a weary way against the back. Her pretty face had dark circles under the eyes, and looked wanner, it seemed to the housekeeper, than she had ever before seen it.

"You're not looking well, Polly," she remarked, with her eyes fixed on that colourless, small countenance. "You're bilious, or growing too fast, maybe. Growing girls are always thin—I tell Lady Charteris that Miss Mand will be less pale and puny when she grows up. I've brought you some apricots, and peaches, my dear, for I know you're uncommonly fond of both."

She opened her basket, displaying a tempting heap of fruit.

Polly thanked her, but rather spiritlessly still—she liked peaches and apricots, but there were other things she liked better.

"How are all the gentry at the great house, Mrs. Hamper?" Duke inquired. "Has Lord Montalien got back from town yet?"

No, my lord had not got back yet, and everybody was well at the great house. The latest news—but of course, Polly had heard it long ago from Alice Warren?

No, Polly had heard nothing; the rainy weather had kept her indoors, and she was very busy getting ready to go away to boarding-school. What was the news?

Her heart thrilled as she quietly asked the question. She knew it was news of Allan Fane.

"Why, the engagement of the honourable Miss Hutton to Mr. Allan Fane. And," Mrs. Hamper said, "I think myself it's a lowering of an earl's grand-daughter to go and marry an artist, but then she ain't as young as she was, and never a beauty at the best of times; and he's a very pleasant-spoken, good-looking young gentleman, and free of his money, I'll say that for him, and the family is willing, and it's been looked forward to for some time. He proposed to her on Tuesday evening last, and he's

going to accompany her to Italy shortly for the July and August months."

The housekeeper paused for breath, her eyes fixed curiously on Polly's face.

Was it altogether to deliver the fruit Mrs. Hamper had stepped out of her way to visit Mr. Mason's?

It was no secret in the servants' hall at the Priory how Mr. Fane was running after little Polly, and that Miss Hutton was jealous. She liked Polly, this fat-fair-and-forty Mrs. Hamper, but she looked with expectant eagerness at the same time for some sign, some token, some cry of pain. There was none. The pale face kept its tired look, the long dark lashes veiled the blue eyes; Mr. Allan Fane might have been Mr. Julius Caesar, dead and gone, for all the emotion that still face and form showed.

Duke looked at her too, in wonder and pride at her "pluck." "Blood will tell," he thought; "she's like her mother—ready to die game!"

"The engagement has been publicly announced then?" Rosanna said. "Will they be married soon?—will the wedding be at the Priory?"

"Oh, dear, no," answered Mrs. Hamper, "they won't be married here—in London most likely, next spring; but of course nothing of that is settled yet. Mr. Fane will wait until my lord comes home and speaks to him as Miss Hutton's nearest relative; though the lady's quite old enough to act for herself, I say again it's a great match for him, only a poor artist—an earl's grand-daughter and three thousand a year."

An earl's grand-daughter and three thousand a year!

Polly had thought he was in love with her, and would be charmed to hear of her seven hundred pounds!

A crushing sense of her own insignificance, poverty, ignorance, low birth, stunned her. What a little stupid she had been not to know from the first he had been only amusing himself with her simplicity and vanity!

She clenched the hand that held the ring firmly, but unseen, and her face still kept its utter indifference.

He had proposed on Tuesday evening, and on Tuesday afternoon he had told her he loved her, and had given her that ring.

He had gone straight from her to Miss Hutton and asked her to be his wife, and they had laughed together most likely over the love-scene with the country girl—the little cooed rustle so easily gulled!

Traitor! coward!

The little white teeth clenched; if looks had been lightning and Allan Fane there he would never have left the house alive.

Mrs. Hamper rose to go, just a trifle disappointed. She had looked to see anger, mortification, sorrow on Polly Mason's face, and she had seen nothing. The girl had heard the news with utter indifference. Perhaps the stories of the servants' hall were unfounded after all.

It was quite clear that Polly had sense, and thought nothing about him.

Duke accompanied the portly lady to the door, and saw her out. When he returned to the parlour he found Polly sitting in the same attitude, her head lying wearily back, her eyes closed, her hands folded, so unlike herself.

"Will you come to the theatre to-night, Duchess?"

Duke said, after a long, blank pause—so gently he said it.

He was not sentimental in any way; he had never wanted to marry anybody in his life, yet by some prescience now he knew just as well how his little girl's heart was bleeding as though the "loved-and-lost" business had been as familiar to him as the scraping of his violin.

"They're bringing out a new comedy in three acts: 'The Prince of Pipes and Boresbad,' and there's a screaming farce to follow. Come and have a good laugh before you go to Miss Primrose and the black-board."

The girl looked up at him with a kind, grateful glance.

"Thank you, Duke—I'll go if Rosanna can spare me, and her wisdom-tooth stops aching."

The scene-painter went back to his work.

"Thank Heaven!" he thought, "she doesn't care for the puppy! I'm not ordinarily of a pugilistic nature, and don't, as a rule, let my angry passions rise, but if I could give Mr. Allan Fane a sound kicking on the first opportunity I think it would do us both good!"

Rosanna went to bed, groaning dismally.

Polly took her sewing and sat down by the window. The wind grew wilder, the leaden sky darker as the afternoon wore on, the rain drops began pattering once more against the glass; and in the young girl's breast as she sat, her needle flying, a sharp and cruel pain ached.

She had been cajoled, deceived, laughed at, her woman's pride hurt to the core—she could never again, her life long, have the same perfect faith in man or woman. She had lost something, the ineffable bloom of perfect innocence and childlike trust, and Allan Fane's was the hand that had brushed it off.

"How dare he! how dare he!" she thought, her little hand clenching again; "how dare he trifle with me so!"

She sat there for over an hour—her anger rising and swelling with every instant. The rainy twilight was falling when suddenly there came a knock at the door. She knew that knock—her work dropped, but before she could rise the door was opened, and the visitor, hat in hand, walked in.

He had come at last!

Allan Fane stood before her, his light summer overcoat wet with rain, his high riding-boots splashed with mud, and he was pale, paler than herself.

Why had he come?

He could not have told her; he could not stay away, though he dreaded—dreaded as he was—to face her! He had given her up—basely, weakly, selfishly, but he must look once more into those matchless blue eyes, though the fiery scorn of their glances slew him. And perhaps, too, he thought she might not know the truth.

He could not stay away. It might be, it must be, the last time, but once again he must look upon the lovely face of Polly Mason!

His first glance at her, as their eyes met, told him she knew all. She rose up and stood before him!

Even in the fading light he could see the streaming fire in her eyes, the scornful curl of her handsome lips. The regal grace of mien that was this girl's chief charm always had never been half as uplifted as now!

She spoke first—he could not have uttered a word.

"You have come for my congratulations, Mr. Fane," she began, in a clear, ringing voice that had neither quiver nor tremor in it. "I hear you are engaged to the Honourable Diana Hutton. Well, you have them! It is an eminently suitable match in every respect. Ay," she added, with cruel emphasis, "birth, fortune, rank, and all!"

He looked at her with horror-struck eyes. What did she mean by that stinging sneer? Did she know of that Band Street shop? Oh, impossible! It was but a random shot that had hit his home.

"It is not every day," pursued Miss Mason, with a smile that stung him, "that the son of a London tailor gets an opportunity of marrying an earl's grand-daughter! Ah, you feel that, Mr. Fane!" and she laughed scornfully. "I know your secret, you see, so carefully guarded; but don't be alarmed, I won't go up to the Priory and tell Miss Hutton. I am afraid, as devotedly as she is attached to you, she might jilt you if she knew it. I won't tell, Mr. Fane; and I wish you every happiness so suitable a match deserves—if the poor scene-painter's poor relation may presume to offer congratulations to a gentleman of Mr. Fane's standing! This ring, which you so kindly forced upon my acceptance the night before last," her voice faltered for the first time; "permit me to return it. If you haven't purchased an engagement ring for Miss Hutton I daresay you might make this answer."

He broke down. He was of a weak nature, impressionable as wax, but as strongly as it was in his nature to love any one but himself he loved this girl.

He broke down as a woman might, his face hidden in his hands, his voice faltering, and asked her to forgive him.

She stood and looked at him—rage, wounded pride, humiliation, scorn, pity, all in her glance. If she had never been beautiful before she was beautiful in this moment.

(To be continued.)

SIR RICHARD WALLACE has given 7,000 francs towards the establishment of soup kitchens for the poor of Paris.

EARTHQUAKES.—On the night of the 12th December an earthquake, which lasted about ten seconds, was felt at Rome. The wave appeared to travel from north-east to south-west. The shocks were stated to be severe, and following in quick succession, but no damage is reported in the town. The earthquake occurred on the night of the new moon. A letter received from Hozzadah stated that an earthquake was felt there the same night.

MRS. LAURA D. FAIR, under sentence of death in San Francisco for the murder of Judge Crittenden, died in gaol on the 30th of December. She had employed her time since her conviction mostly in literary work, writing her autobiography, and left behind her, it is said, a dramatized version of Owen Meredith's "Lucile." By a singular coincidence, Mr. Cook, one of the counsel engaged in her defence before the jury, died in San Francisco on the same day.



[ROBERT LEE'S HOME.]

ROBERT LEE'S TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE Christmas revel was over. The silver was-sail-bowl had been drained, and the Christmas trees stripped of its fruitage. The "yule log" was burning itself out on the broad hearthstone, the tall, waxen tapers in the massive candelabra shed but a dim light around, the hothouse blossoms, with which lavish hands had crowded the costly vases, were beginning to droop, and only the holly boughs, with their ruby-like berries, looked fresh and bright.

Old Ralph Harcourt had kept Christmas in right English fashion, and now that the guests had gone was toasting his feet and supping his last draught of ale by the glowing grate in his own chamber; but Catherine, his peerless daughter, yet lingered in the great drawing-room.

Catherine, beautiful Catherine Harcourt! I wish I had the pencil of a Copley, or a Vandyke, that I might portray her to you as she stood there listening to the tall, distinguished-looking naval officer who was suing for her hand.

Her superb figure, robed in crimson velvet, her hair braided up with rubies and diamonds, the rare jewels blazing on her arms and neck, all formed a dazzling picture—a picture which accorded well with the aspect of that grand old room.

Philip Sinclair was pouring forth words of fire, but his passionate declaration did not deepen the glow on her cheek or kindle new light in her large brown eyes, her attitude did not change, and there was not even a tremor of the white-gloved hands, clasped with such careless grace.

Her reply was a gentle but firm rejection, and, as the proud officer turned on his heel, she drew a long sigh of relief, and, leaning against a fluted pillar, seemed to lose herself in a delightful reverie.

The Christmas tree in the opposite corner had borne many a splendid gift for her, but her gaze did

not turn to the mosaic table on which they lay in a gorgeous heap. She drew from her bouquet-holder a bunch of simple flowers—heliotropes, verbenas, geraniums, and one white moss-rosebud, just opening its spotless heart. This bouquet, which had drooped from a bough of the "gift-tree," the petted heiress of all Ralph Harcourt's wealth prized a thousand times more than the costly offerings brought by her "dear five hundred friends" of the West End aristocracy.

As she remembered the eager gaze Robert Lee had cast on her when he saw that she had exchanged a bouquet of the costliest exotics for those flowers the crimson surged over her beautiful face, her eyes flashed like stars in the shadow of their heavy lids—her red, ripe lips grew tremulous. Lovingly her fingers wandered over the gift, while her young heart beat high with hope.

"Catherine!" exclaimed a deep-toned voice, and she started like a guilty thing and thrust the blossoms out of sight.

"Catherine! Catherine!" the voice repeated with a world of emotion in its tones, and the speaker hastened to her side.

Robert Lee was a young and handsome man, with the seal of genius on his broad brow, and eyes full of thought and feeling; but there was a touching sadness in their clear depths and his face was very pale.

"Catherine," he continued, "I have come to bid you good-bye. I am going."

"Going?" cried the girl, and she sprang forward and stood before him as pale as the marble statue hard by. "Going, Mr. Lee?"

"Yes; your father and I have quarrelled."

"How—what?" gasped Catherine.

"Because I have dared tell him what I have never till now spoken, save in looks and acts—that I, the poor secretary, have presumed to lift my eyes to Catherine Harcourt—that I love her as one can love but once in a lifetime! Catherine, Catherine, he bade me leave his home for ever! But I could

not go without seeing you once more. Over the wall which the Harcourt pride has raised between us my heart must speak to yours to-night. What have you to say to my confession—could you learn to love me if there were no barrier to separate us? Tell me frankly, dearest, for in this hour there should be no disguises."

"That lesson is already learned," murmured the girl, blushing and trembling as if he were a prince and she a poor peasant maid; "you are dearer to me than aught else in the wide world."

"Catherine!" was all Robert Lee in his great joy could summon strength to say; but that little word from his lips was far more eloquent than Philip Sinclair's vehement protestations, and Catherine's whole frame thrilled with delight. The next moment she was folded in a strong embrace; his lips reverently touched her cheek and brow, his voice murmured words never to be forgotten. For a half-hour, perhaps, they stood thus, abandoning themselves fully to the bliss of "love's young dream," then Lee appeared to recollect himself, and said:

"Well, Catherine, if we must part, the memory of this interview will brighten the darkest hours. I have no right to ask anything more. Though I yearn to call you my betrothed, I leave you free. I am going out into the world to battle with its stern realities. If I succeed, if I win fame and fortune, and you are yet unmarried, I will lay them at your feet. If I do not you and I will never meet again till we reach the spirit land. Farewell, Catherine! Good-bye seems too cold a word for such a parting as ours."

Once more he held her close to his brave, true heart; once more kissed her, then, with a half-smothered "Heaven bless you!" turned away.

CHAPTER II.

"BREAD, bread, Robert!" moaned young Lee's crippled brother, and he held up his wasted little hands, and looked the very picture of sorrowful entreaty.

"Bread, child? Yes, I will get it," and the young man started from the deal table, on which he was copying some law papers, and, hurrying to a closet, brought forth a scanty crust.

"Oh, it is hard! I cannot eat it. Find me a better piece, Robert," cried the boy; "and mind—a large piece, a whole slice, Robert."

An expression of intense pain passed over Robert Lee's face as he rejoined:

"Indeed, it is all there is—the last crust, Arthur! Wait till I finish my copying, then you shall have some more."

"It will be a great while to wait," said the invalid. "Why not run round the corner and get it now?"

"To tell you the truth, dear Arthur, I haven't a penny, and shan't have till the work is done, unless I beg or steal!"

The crippled boy did not speak, but hot tears rained over his wan face and fell on the bread in his hand.

"Robert," called a voice, a sweet, faint voice, from a nook in the room, screened by a loose calico curtain—"is the gruel ready? I am so weak and ill I must have something to revive me!"

The young man darted across the room, lifted the curtain, and flung himself down beside a straw pallet, on which lay a woman, evidently in the last stages of consumption.

"Oh, mother, mother, mother!" he cried; "I have toiled day and night, hoping that my slender funds would not be exhausted till the copying was finished, but the last penny has gone, and the work will not be completed till noon, and we have neither food nor coal, nor even a basket of shavings. I have tried to get other employment, but in vain! I cannot steal, but it is no crime to beg! I am going out, and, Heaven helping me, ere I come back I will have something for your own and Arthur's comfort!"

Fondly he kissed both the invalids, murmured a few more cheering words, and descended to the street. But though he had spoken hopefully to them his heart was heavy, his eye mournful, his brow knit, his face haggard.

As he stood at the street crossing, waiting for carriage after carriage to pass, a splendid equipage came whirling towards him. He knew the spirited horses, the servants in livery outside, the portly man and beautiful girl within.

The next instant the carriage was stopped, the footman sprang to the ground, and, putting his head in at the open window, cried:

"There is the man you have been searching for, sir."

The merchant prince and his daughter both gave a sudden start, and Catherine's cheek crimsoned as she glanced in the direction indicated.

"Yes! that is Robert Lee!" exclaimed the old man. "Run and ask him if he will be kind enough to join us."

"Yes, sir," replied the menial, hastening to do his master's bidding.

"Ralph Harcourt wishes to see me?" ejaculated the discarded secretary as the servant delivered the message. "Do I hear aright? There must be some mistake. I am not the person for whom he has sent."

"Yes, yes, you are; we have been searching for you all the morning. The carriage is waiting yonder, and Mr. Harcourt and Miss Catherine too."

At this allusion Robert Lee's heart beat fast, and in a few moments more he stood face to face with Catherine Harcourt, for the first time since their memorable parting.

Never had she met him clad in such rusty garments and wearing such a forlorn aspect, for, while employed by her father, his salary had been sufficient to afford him and those dependent on him the comforts of life.

But Catherine, though dressed like a queen, thought not of his threadbare suit; every fault was absorbed in the joy of meeting him once more. She could not speak, for strong emotion choked her utterance; but she extended her hand with childish eagerness, and her brown eyes grew humid with happy tears.

"Ah! we've found you at last!" cried her father. "And sounds, Lee, I'm heartily glad to see you!"

"I assure you, Mr. Harcourt," said the young man, "that I am happy to see you and your daughter once more; 'tis a pleasure I scarcely dared expect after what passed at your house on Christmas night."

The old merchant coloured, and anxiously played with the glove he had drawn off.

"Why," he continued, "I cannot do without you, and, as for Catherine, she can speak for herself some other time."

The girl blushed and smiled, and Robert Lee's face began to grow radiant with the reflection of the sunshine on hers.

"Let the past be forgotten," said the old man, grasping the arm of his secretary; "it's a rare thing for Philip Harcourt to beg any man's pardon, but I do yours. Forgive me, Robert Lee!"

"I do, sir—there's my hand upon it!" Harcourt seized the proffered hand, pressed it warmly, and resumed:

"We are friends then—friends, young man! But where is your law office now? I want to send Catherine home, and have some private conversation with you. We went to the place where you used to have an office when you acted as my secretary, but could find no trace of you."

"The hard times drove me from that place," replied Lee. "I have had a terrible struggle since I left you, and at present my office, the sick chamber of my mother and brother, our parlour, kitchen, and hall are comprised in one attic. You did not look high enough for my sign—there it is!"

He pointed to the dingy old building, where away up, up, up, beneath the eaves might be seen the words "ROBERT LEE."

"Well, well," said Harcourt, "I am sorry to hear you've been driven into such narrow quarters, but never mind! If you and I agree you'll soon find yourself in a very different position. But there must be no listeners to our talk—not even Catherine can be admitted to our confidence yet. How shall we manage it? Ah, I have it! Catherine has long been wishing to become acquainted with your family—she can stay with the invalids while you drive down to my counting-house with me. Will that suit you, Kate?"

"Suit me, papa? Oh, I shall be so glad to remain here," replied the girl.

Robert Lee felt like one moving in a dream as he assisted Catherine from the carriage and escorted her up the creaking stairs leading to that comfortable attic.

What could her father's manner portend? What important topic did he wish to discuss with him?

These queries haunted him, and he longed to have them answered.

As he threw open the shattered door and ushered his companion into the dismal room he said, somewhat bitterly:

"This is a wretched place for you to visit, Catherine."

"But it is your home, Robert," murmured the girl. "I never entered the stateliest mansion with the wild joy that thrills me now, for I am by your side; my father has consented to my coming, and I feel sure our troubles are at an end."

"Heaven bless you for those words!" exclaimed Lee, lifting her hand to his tremulous lips. "Heaven makes me worthy of such love as yours!"

And he drew back the calico curtain which separated his mother's couch from the place where he toiled at his copying.

What a scene was that thus revealed to the high-born girl! There lay the two invalids, clasped in each other's arms. The woman's pale face still bore traces of the beauty which, in her girlhood, had made her the "pride of the village," but cheek and brow were deeply furrowed, the golden sheen of her

hair was almost lost in the frost of premature age, and her large blue eyes sparkled with unnatural lustre.

The crippled boy had a head and face which reminded Catherine of the picture of Guido's cherubs she had seen in Rome, save that an expression of habitual pain hung about the sweet mouth and slightly contracted the marble brow. The pillows of the couch and its only counterpane were scrupulously clean, but they had been patched and repatched. Catherine's heart ached as she looked at them. Both invalids glanced at Robert in surprise as he entered with that richly dressed lady leaning on his arm; but all at once a smile broke over the woman's wan countenance as she exclaimed:

"My son, this is Catherine—I know it's Catherine!"

"Yes, I am Catherine Harcourt."

And the beautiful girl sank down sobbing by the bedside.

Robert Lee waited to hear no more; the next moment he was in Ralph Harcourt's carriage, and soon afterwards he found himself in the counting-house of the firm, of which Catherine's father was the senior partner.

"Now let us proceed to business," said the old man as he turned the key in the massive lock; "it is as a legal adviser I have sought you this morning. We have been sued for ten thousand pounds by the widow and children of a partner who died at Paris. Of course we shan't pay a penny, so we've told their agent, but he declares he will institute a law-suit. You are just the man we need for our attorney; you not only have a thorough knowledge of your profession, but from having been my secretary are familiar with all the crooks and turns of our business. You have long been anxious for some case which would bring you before the public eye—here it is! If you undertake it I know you will succeed, and when that case is gained half the sum you save us, together with Catherine's hand, shall be your reward!"

Robert Lee sprang to his feet, and began to pace the room; his fine face flashed, his thoughtful eyes kindled.

"Oh, sir, you are too kind!" he said, earnestly: "give me all the necessary papers, and I will begin to look into the case at once."

Ralph Harcourt smiled triumphantly, thrust a retaining fee into his hand, gave him a formidable pile of papers, then drove back with him to the narrow street where he had taken up his abode.

When Lee reached his home he found a bright fire burning on the hearth, a comfortable meal smoking on the table, and his mother leaning against Catherine, and sipping the gruel she had prepared.

The young man's heart was too full for speech, but Catherine read his happiness in his eloquent eyes, and once more "Hope, gentlest astrologer," whispered bright prophecies in his ear.

As Lee handed her into the carriage her father gave him a cordial invitation to visit them often, and Catherine's glance said more than the old man's words.

CHAPTER III.

WITH a thousand bright dreams of the future Robert Lee began his task; but as he proceeded the truth forced itself upon him that Ralph Harcourt had required his aid in an unjust cause. The claims of the dead merchant's family were well grounded, and withholding the sum for which they had sued would be a base fraud. Could he—the high-souled, generous, and strictly upright Robert Lee—lend his assistance to a villainous scheme which would wrest away the inheritance of a family that might be suffering like his own?

The young man's heart sank as he saw to what his client would fain lead him, and for a whole week a great struggle was going on in his mind. Should he succeed, and he saw nothing to prevent it, competence would be his—the dear ones, now starving, would be surrounded with luxury, and Catherine, in her superb beauty, would be his bride.

Robert Lee's temptation was great, but the right conquered. In the quiet of the winter's night he sat down and wrote as follows:

"MR. HARDCOURT—Dear Sir,—I have examined the papers you put in my possession, and decided to resign the case. I love my poor mother and crippled brother—I love Catherine with the strong devotion of manhood—but I cannot for their sakes consent to rob the widow and the fatherless. Thank Heaven, I have not been obliged to spend a shilling of the retaining fee with which you would have bought my honour! I return it, hoping that you may see the wrong you contemplate in its true light."

"ROBERT LEE."

Another letter—a letter full of yearning love and sorrows, but with the high principles of the writer stamped on every line, told Catherine Harcourt all, and bade her a long farewell.

A month went by, during which want stared the

Lees in the face; then a benevolent Quaker, who had heard in some way of old Ralph Harcourt's proposal and its rejection, found his way to the little office where Robert had toiled and suffered, and engaged him in a just and important cause.

From that time the young lawyer's star was in the ascendant; his management of John Broten's case won him his first laurels, and was the stepping-stone to fortune.

The attic was exchanged for a pleasant home in the suburbs, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the bloom come back to his mother's cheek, and the crippled Arthur surrounded by everything that could minister to his comfort.

But there was a void in Robert Lee's soul—Catherine and he seemed almost as completely separated as if seas rolled between them.

It was on a clear, frosty night that he sat in his chamber, for he and his mother had been spending the Christmas holidays at home.

Suddenly a cry of "Fire! fire! fire!" sent him to his feet; then the clangor of bells swelled out on the air, and the rattling of engines and the shouts of firemen filled the street with a wild tumult.

Lee flung up the window and leaned out.

"Where is it?—where's the fire?" cried one.

"Ralph Harcourt's house is all in flames! Fire, fire, fire!" said another.

Robert Lee's heart gave a sudden bound, then stood still with dread.

"Catherine! Oh, Catherine!" he gasped, and darted away with the speed of a winged creature.

Ten minutes later he stood before the burning mansion.

What a grand and terrible sight it was!

The fire had crept up over the sandstone walls, the iron balconies, the arched windows, the slated roof, and the next moment Catherine's home was wrapped in a mantle of flame.

Where was she—she whom he had loved so fondly? Heavy clouds of smoke hung around the mansion, but in an instant he saw her standing at the observatory casement, her auburn hair sweeping around her like a veil, her face wearing an expression that appalled him.

"Save me and my poor old father! We are burning to death!"

Such was the wild cry which came ringing down to Robert Lee, and quick as thought he plunged into the ruin.

Along tottering corridors and through fiery chambers he flew, till he gained the observatory, and stood beside Catherine and her father, whom she had drawn up with her.

"Throw us a rope ladder!" he shouted.

The call was obeyed, and in a few moments Catherine and the old man had reached the street.

Lee called a cab and ere long they were safe in his suite of rooms, and he and his mother ministering to their wants.

"Well, you didn't love my girl well enough to take that case, and I lost it," said Ralph Harcourt, "but you've saved our lives at the risk of your own."

"I would give my life for her," replied Lee, "but not my honour!"

And Catherine's tremulous lips warmly spoke her approval.

From that night's injuries her father never recovered, and on his death bed he gave his consent to the union of those whom his will had separated so long.

When the mourning had expired Catherine Harcourt became the young lawyer's bride, and now they often tell their sons and daughters the story of ROBERT LEE'S TEMPTATION. C. J. G.

THE FIRST KISS OF LOVE.—First, innocent love is a strange and beautiful thing. There is that in female beauty which it is pleasure merely to gaze upon; but beware of looking on it too long. The lustrous black pupil contrasting with the pearly white of the eye and the carnated skin—the clear, placid blue into which you see down, down to the very soul—the deep hazel, dazzling as a sunlit stream, seen through the opening to its willow banks—all may be gazed upon with impunity ninety-nine times, but at the hundredth you are a gone man. On a sudden the eye strikes you as deeper and brighter than ever, or you fancy that a look is stolen at you beneath a drooping eyelid, and that there is a slight flush on the cheek, and at once you are in love. Then you spend the morning in contriving apologies for calling, and the days and evenings in playing them off. When you lay your hand on the door bell your knees tremble and your breast feels compressed; and, when admitted, you sit and look and say nothing, and go away determined to tell your whole story next time. This goes on for months, varied by the occasional daring of kissing a flower which she presents; perhaps, in the wild intoxication of love, waiting a kiss towards her; or, in affectation of the Quixotic style, kneeling, with mock heroic emphasis, to kiss her hand in pretended jest.

The next time you meet both are as reserved and stately as ever; till at last, on some unnoticeable day, when you are left alone with the lady, you quite unawares find her hand in yours, and you know not how, you press upon her lips, delayed, but not withheld, the first kiss of love.—ONE WHO ONCE WAS YOUNG.

QUEEN ANNE.

It is scarcely possible to conceive a greater contrast in respect of greatness than that presented between the reign and the character of Anne Stuart. The reign, although it occupied but a fractional part of the life of the queen, was, in point of results, one of the most important in the annals of England,—the queen, though she was one of the best-intentioned and most conscientious of our Sovereigns, was at the same time one of the least able and most common-place.

Although her peculiarities and weaknesses really determined to a great degree not only the fate of the English Constitution, but the whole course of European events, she seems to us now in herself rather an accident than an essential part of her own reign. A youthful fancy, confirmed by habit, placed her at the almost absolute command of an able but rapacious and overbearing woman, and to the accident of this woman becoming the wife of John Churchill we owe nearly all of national greatness that is associated with the name of Queen Anne. Had this imperious favourite not obtained this ascendancy over the mind of a weak princess the armies of England might never have been commanded by the great general who led them to victory, and the power of Louis XIV. might have remained unbroken, even if it did not become still more paramount in Europe. So, had Sarah Jennings been as capable of retaining as she was of gaining an ascendancy over the mind of her royal mistress, the influence of France over the affairs of Europe might have been suspended for many years, even if that country itself should have escaped disaster, and the empire and resources of Spain might have been once more placed at the disposal of the House of Austria.

Again, had not the sentiments of Marlborough's wife and the opportunities for a display of his military abilities afforded by the great European contest against the power of France gradually estranged his sympathies from the Tory party and its High Church and Right-Divine associations, and drawn him towards the leaders of the Whig party, the fortune of whose cause hung on the issue of that European contest, Anne might have been left entirely to the impulses of her own religious and political predilections, and the Crown of Great Britain might have passed, either by substitution or succession, to the exiled but legitimate heir of the House of Stuart, to the entire exclusion of the Protestant House of Hanover. England, in that case, might have been doomed to a repetition of the great Civil Wars of the preceding century and on an equal scale.

On the other hand, had not the subtle and intriguing Harley succeeded in finding a suitable instrument for his purpose of undermining the position of Marlborough in the "very humble" Abigail Hill (better known as Mrs. Masham), Anne might have never dared to rebel against the tyranny of the Duchess of Marlborough, and England might have taken the place of France as the arbiter of Europe, and in her turn provoked a hostile European coalition.

As it was, Anne Stuart, herself deeply imbued with the principles of the Right-Divine, ascended to the throne, and remained upon it to the end of her life, to the exclusion of the legitimate heir; called to her counsels men whose principles she detested and for whom she had no personal regard, and curtailed her reign of its growing European reputation and lowered for the time the position of England by what was certainly in itself an inglorious and discreditable pacification, though it may have really been a not unfortunate event for the more lasting interest of this country.

CHINESE VIEW OF EUROPEANS.—The Chinese of the interior, whom business takes to Canton or Macao, always go the first thing to look at the Europeans on the promenade. It is one of the most amusing of sights to them. They squat in rows along the sides of the quays, smoking their pipes and fanning themselves, contemplating the while, with a satirical and contemptuous eye, the English and Americans, who promenade up and down, from one end to the other, keeping time with admirable precision. Europeans who go to China are apt to consider the inhabitants of the celestial city very odd and supremely ridiculous, and the provincial Chinese at Canton and Macao pay back the sentiment with interest. It is very amusing to hear their sarcastic remarks on the appearance of the devils of the west, their utter astonishment at the sight of their tight-

fitting garments, their wonderful trousers, and prodigious round hats like chimney pots—their shirt collars, adapted to cut off the ears, and making a frame around such grotesque faces, with long noses and blue eyes, no beard or moustache, but a handful of curly hair on each cheek. The shape of the dress coat puzzles them above everything. They try in vain to account for it, calling it a half garment, because it is impossible to make it meet over the breast, and because there is nothing in front to correspond to the tails behind. They admire the judgment and exquisite taste of putting buttons as big as sapecks behind the back, where they never have anything to button. How much handsomer they think themselves, with their narrow, black, oblique eyes, high cheek bones and little round noses, their shaven crowns, and magnificent pigtails hanging almost to their heels. Add to all these natural graces a conical hat, covered with red fringe, an ample tunic with large sleeves, and black satin boots, with a white sole of immense thickness, and it must be evident to all that a European cannot compare in appearance with a Chinese.

FACETIÆ.

WHAT is the difference between a fool and a looking-glass? One speaks without reflecting, and the other reflects without speaking.

YOU talk of your troubles, but yours is not such a hard case as mine, as the oyster said to the fisherman.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS.—Mrs. Malaprop is anxious to know whether this Don Juan Question between England and America has anything to do with poor Lord Byron.—*Punch.*

ADJUSTMENT.
Maude (to the Colonel from India): "Uncle, why don't you wear this chignon on the top of your head?"—*Punch.*

"MRS. MIFFIN" said a visitor, "Emma has your features, but I think she has got her father's hair." "Oh, now I see," said the dear little Emma, "it's because I have father's hair that he has to wear a wig."

CONSOLATION FOR THE LITTLE.—A great man once said "no man is necessary." We have changed all that nowadays, nobody is a nobody: does a minister wish to send a telegram of pressing importance!—he employs a cipher.—*Fun.*

KICKING THE BEAM—AND THE BOARD.—At many metropolitan railway stations you may "try your weight" for a penny. Not to be outdone in liberality, the directors of the line will try your temper on half a dozen grounds gratuitously.—*Fun.*

PLEASANT DAY FOR OLD MCGRUMPIE.—"Please, sir, 'ere's some more ugly valentines, sir." This was what that odious page-boy kept asserting as he rushed up after every post with a basketful of abusive epistles. He has since left!—*Fun.*

COCOA FOR CHILDREN.—The prices at which chocolate is retailed to small boys range very low. It has been ascertained that as many as four large cigars of the material so called have been bought for a penny. Dirt cheap.—*Punch.*

A GENTLEMAN received an unpaid letter, commencing, "Sir, your letter of yesterday bears upon its face the stamp of falsehood." His answer was brief and to the purpose. "Sir, I only wish your letter of yesterday bore upon its face a stamp of any kind."

SEVERE ON THE PIANISTES.

Cousin Lizzy: "I don't think, Cousin Joe, we were waiting in time."

Cousin Joe: "Think so? Perhaps not, if you were keeping time to the bass, as I know I was keeping time to the treble."—*Punch.*

"CHAFF."

Apple-Stall Keeper (to the Boys): "Now, then, what are you gaping at? What do you want?"

Street Boy: "Nothin'."

Apple-Stall Keeper: "Then take it, and be off!"

Street Boy: "Very well: wrap it up for us in a piece o' paper!" [Boys].—*Punch.*

REMOVED TO ANOTHER COURT.

Youth in the Doorway: "I say, Bill—look at George, with 'is valentine. I thought 'e'd been hout a-courtin' lately."

George: "If I ain't been a-courtin', I soon shall be, for this 'ere's a summons to the County Court."—*Fun.*

FOR THE FOURTEENTH.—It is perhaps hazardous to attempt to limit the rhyming capabilities of any word in the English language, with such a wonder-working magician as Mr. Browning amongst us, but it is believed that there is but one rhyme to be found to Valentine. It is no contempt of Court to say the claimant knows it well.—*Punch.*

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.—Mr. Spurgeon (the Nonconformist says) tells the following story of the conversion of a servant-girl. When she was asked:

"Are you converted?" she replied, "I hope so, sir." "What makes you think that you are really a child of Heaven?" "Well, sir, there is a great change in me from what there used to be." "What is the change?" "I don't know, sir; but there is a change in all things. But there is one thing, I always sweep under the mats now."

The other day an urchin who was furnished with a stock of pencils accosted a young naval officer in the suburbs of London, and asked him to buy. In order to silence the boy's importunity the officer said, jestingly: "I can't write." The pencil-boy at once hailed a passing policeman with: "Hi, Bobby, take this gentleman off to school to be bed-dicated; he can't write."

MALAPROPIANA.—Our good friend, Mrs. Malaprop, is surprised to hear that a little children's story she remembers in her childhood should have become a subject of the gravest political discussion. She says she never dreamed, when she was reading the *American Nights Entertainments*, that such a fuss as she hears talked of would be ever made in Parliament about the Ali Baba case.—*Punch.*

IRISH GALLANTRY.

Young Reginald Parry, an English officer quartered in Limerick, is seeing the Misses Yavassour, two of the Limerick belles, home across the toll-bridge. He offers the toll-keeper his money.

Toll-keeper: "Oh, captain, do you think it's so mane I'd be as to take the toll of you when you're after goin' out of yer way to escort the young ladies home? Sure, thin, I'm not such an inferior baste as that!"—*Punch.*

A VALENTINE TRAGEDY.

Head of Select Establishment (anxiously): "Miss Mary Caroline Psycho, this was found under your pillow.—(Reads).—'I do avow that I am thine, oh, wilt thou be my valentine?'—From your Spoozy Cousin!—G. Spoozy Cousin! Odious vulgarism! What will become of you—indulging in such perilous and disreputable practices?"

Miss Psycho: "Please, Miss Backboard, a spoon is included in the list of articles required by pupils coming to this establishment."—*Punch.*

"THE SAME RESULTS FROM DIFFERENT CAUSES SPRING."—An Irishman went out recently in Wicklow very early in search of some game on an estate where the Game Laws were strictly enforced. Turning a sharp corner, whom did he meet but the gentleman who owned the estate! Paddy, seeing the game was up, coolly advanced towards the gentleman, and said: "The top of the morning to your honour! What brought your honour out so early this morning?" The gentleman replied by saying: "Indeed, Paddy, I just strolled out to see if I could find an appetite for my breakfast;" and then, seeing Paddy rather suspiciously, said, "And now, Paddy, what brought you out so early this morning?" Paddy replied: "Indeed, yer honour, I just strolled out to see if I could find a breakfast for my appetite."

WAIVED RIGHTS.—An Irishman was up before a Criminal Court recently, on the charge of having in his possession forged notes, knowing them to be counterfeit. "Do you know your rights?" said the judge. "Not so well as I do my wrongs," said he; "for we haven't been such intimate acquaintances of late." "Well, you have the right to challenge the twelve men who will be called upon to try you," said the judge. "Pon me sowl, thin," said the prisoner, "I'm not goin' to exercise it. That's a nice job you'd be after givin' me this mornin', to challenge and fight them too—one down and another come on, I suppose."

PUBLIC MONEY AND LAND.—The Dutch people are in great indignation because the King of the Netherlands has sold certain possessions and protectorates on the West Coast of Africa to Queen Victoria. Is it possible that, in any dealing with foreigners, the British Government have got the best of a bargain? The British public, perhaps, would like to know whether, if the Ministers of the Crown can afford to buy land on the Guinea Coast, they cannot afford to refrain from selling Crown Lands in the New Forest and elsewhere, heretofore accessible, for enjoyment and recreation, to the people of England.—*Punch.*

Every housekeeper, if not every lodger, well knows that the cat is capable of running away with lobsters—or anything. Mrs. Berry may consider whether the spirits are really so likely to be snappers-up of unconsidered trifles as the cat is. At some future *seance* she will perhaps find that the cat has walked off with a walking-stick or an umbrella, or if not the cat that Something has, or Somebody, if, instead of Somebody, it is some spirit out of the body that disappears with property, of course it can be of no use for her to count her spoons before sitting down with a "circle" to a *seance*. Looking, however, to the probability of missing some of them thereafter, she might do well to secure the attendance of a detective in plain clothes, because although the spirits who "know all mortal consequences" would penetrate his disguise and elude his

grasp, for the incorporeal is not to be collared, yet seances, some of them, do seem attended with manifestations which might constitute cases for Sessions. —Punch.

A SLY HAND.—When Dr. Thompson, a distinguished Scotch clergyman, was minister of Marlinoh he happened to preach from the text, "Look not upon the wine when it is red in the cup," from which he made a most eloquent and impressive discourse against drunkenness, stating its fatal effects on the head, heart, and purse. Several of his observations were levelled at two of his congregation with whom he was well acquainted, who frequently poured out libations to the rosy god. At the dismissal of the congregation the two friends met, the doctor being close behind them. "Did you hear it, Johnny?" quoth the one. "Did I hear't? What didna hear't? I ne'er winked an e'e the hallow sermon." "Aweel, an' what thought ye o't?" "Adeed, Davie, I think he's been a lad in his day, or he couldna ken'd sae weel about it! Ah, he's been a sly hand, the minister!"

PROPHECIES FOR THE YEAR 1872.

The year 1872 will be a very eventful one to every maiden who gets married.

Throughout the whole course of the year, whenever the moon waxes the nights will grow dark.

If dandies wear their beards there will be less work for barbers. He who wears his moustache will have something to sneeze at.

Whoever is in love this year will think his sweetheart an angel. Whoever gets married will find out whether it is true.

He that loses his hair this year will grow bald. He that loses his wife will become a widower.

If a young lady happens to blush she will look red in the face. If she dreams of a young man three nights in succession, it is a sign of something. If she dreams of him four times, or has a toothache, it is ten to one that she is a long time getting either of them out of her head.

If anybody jumps overboard without knowing how to swim it is two to one he gets drowned.

If any one lends an umbrella it is ten to one he is obliged to go home in the rain for his pains.

Whoever runs in debt this year will be dunned. Many an old sinner will resolve to turn over a new leaf this year, but the new leaf will turn out blank.

It is probable that if there is no business doing people will complain of hard times; but it is certain that those who hang themselves will escape starving to death.

He that bites off his nose or turns politician will act like a lunatic, and this is the most certain of all.

A PORTRAIT OF AN IMPORTANT MAN.—"Waiter!" The waiter replied, "Sir?" "Waiter, I am a man of few words, and don't like to be continually ringing the bell and disturbing the house; I'll thank you to pay attention to what I say, and to remember that although there are three ways of doing things, I only like one way in those who have subordinate stations and minds. In the first place bring me a glass of brandy-and-water (cold) with a little sugar, and also a tea-spoon; wipe down this table, throw some coals on the fire, and sweep down the hearth; bring me in a couple of candles, pen, ink, and paper, some wafers, and a little sealing-wax; tell the ostler to take care of my horse, dress him well, stop his feet, and let me know when he's ready to feed; order the chambermaid to prepare me a good bed, take care that the sheets are well aired, a clean night-cap, and a glass of water in the room; send the boots with a pair of slippers that I can walk to the stable in; tell him I must have my boots cleaned, and brought into the room to-night, and that I shall want to be called at five o'clock in the morning; ask your mistress what I can have for supper; tell her I should like a roast duck, or something of that sort; desire your master to step in, I want to ask him a few questions; he is in the interest of the Liberator, I believe, and so much the better, for I have a friend who will stand for the town at the next vacancy; send me all the directions; change this five shillings' worth of stamps into coin, none of the silver to be worn; when does the mail arrive with the letters, and what time before p.m. does the mail leave? are there any soldiers quartered in the town, and how many? just tell me what time it is by the clock on the landing, and leave the room." This portrait is from life.

An aquarium has been added to the Edinburgh Museum of Art and Science comprising a double range of ten tanks for fresh and salt water fishes. The specimens are as yet limited to perch, gold-fish, minnows, roaches, sticklebacks, etc., eels, anemones, crabs, and molluscs, etc. The exhibition, from the curiosity it excites, will be very popular, and already some pressure and crowding is the consequence.

The Mysore Museum has lately been enriched by the head and skin of an enormous fish, caught in the Cubbang river, 30 miles above Nungengode, by

Mr. Sanderson on a hand-line 400 yards in length. When landed it measured 60 inches in length, its greater girth was 38 inches, and it weighed at least 130 lbs., if not 150 lbs.—the size of many a man. It is a species of carp. It has shrunk considerably now, but it is well worth inspection.

ASTRONOMICAL PREDICTION.—An approaching collision between the earth and the "greatest of all the comets" is predicted on the 12th of August by M. Plantamour, the celebrated Professor of Astronomy at Geneva. In that struggle we back the earth, for it will surely be as bad for the comet as it was for Stephenson's "coo." If it would just frizzle up with its tail our Yankee consins it might do them good; they are getting very slow, and want some comet spruce put into them.

MARRIAGE OF THE EMPEROR OF CHINA.—The Emperor of China is soon to be married, and has imported a pair of elephants to assist at the ceremony. His future consort is undergoing a careful training in the etiquette of court life. For three years the lemons of Nankin, Hongshan, and Canton have been engaged on the silks and satins for her bridal trousseau, and just now they are announced as completed, at a cost of nearly half a million in our money. While the bridegroom, who has the sun for his emblem, goes forth in a car drawn by elephants, his bride, who represents the moon, is to be borne to her palace in a palanquin composed entirely of strings of pearls.

LOOK WELL TO THE END.

THOUGH rosy may be the beginning,
Though Hope may her bright fancies lend,
Though sunlight shine on us unclouded,
'Tis best to look well to the end!

For the rosiest morning may darken,
The sunniest day will go down,
And the cross we must bear, light or heavy,
Before we can hope for the crown.

Look well to the end, through the vapour
Of error, and folly, and sin—
Keep an eye to the goal in the distance—
And study the compass within.

Whether breasting the waves in their fury,
Or sailing on seas that are calm,
Let us make for the harbour of safety,
Land-locked, as we sing our life-psalm.

The bright star of Hope shines in beauty
To light us along our dark way,
And no clouds should e'er dim her white forehead—
Faith's sister, and fair as the day.

Let us measure our steps as we journey,
And think where our footsteps may tend:
While we pray for Heaven's guidance in all things,
'Tis best to look well to the end. M. A. K.

GEMS.

It is not until we have passed through the furnace that we are made to know how much dross is in our composition.

EVERY earnest glance we give to the realities around us, with intent to learn, proceeds from a holy impulse, and is a song of praise.

The faults of the world can only be learned by a long acquaintance with it, and by suffering from the acquaintance.

If in our school days the rule of three is proverbially trying, how much harder in after-life do we find the rule of one?

The cloudy weather melts at length into beauty, and the brightest smiles of the heart are born of its tears.

A GREAT man accomplishes least in an age of power, as burning-glasses burn feeblest in the hottest days.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CREAM CAKES.—Half pound butter, three-fourths pound of flour, eight eggs, one pint water. Stir the butter into the water, which should be warm, set it on the fire in a saucepan, and slowly bring to a boil, stirring it often. When it boils put in the flour, boil for one minute, stirring all the while; take from the fire, turn into a deep dish, and let it cool. Beat the eggs very light, and whip into this cold paste first the yolks, then the whites. Drop in great spoonfuls upon buttered paper, taking care not to let them touch or run into each other, and bake ten minutes.

BUTTER PACKING.—A Michigan dairyman has lately published his method of packing butter. He has oaken tubs with hooks at each end. They are

14 inches in diameter at the top, 9 inches at the bottom and 16 inches high. In packing, a cambric bag is made to fit the tub. The butter is packed in the tub as it stands on the small end—the sack being long enough to extend above the edges of the tub—and is pressed down firmly until within 1½ inch from the top, when a circular cloth is laid over it, the edges of the sack turned over that, and a layer of fine salt placed on it. The head is now put in its place, the tub turned up, and the butter in the sack, of course falling down to the bottom, leaves a space all round it, which is filled with brine poured through a hole in the small end. When full the hole is corked up tight. The butter floats in the brine, and is, he maintains, effectually preserved from the air, and will thus keep for an almost indefinite period.

STATISTICS.

UNITED STATES TOBACCO.—The native leaf tobacco exported from the United States for the year ending June 30, 1870, amounted to 21,100,420 lb., and during the year ending June 30, 1871, to 19,908,793 lb. The seed leaf grown in the State of New York, it is asserted, is in great demand for manufacture instead of fine Connecticut, which did not grow in 1870. The demand for Pennsylvania and Ohio tobacco of the crop of 1870 it is stated has materially improved. The yield of the crop of seed leaf tobacco of 1871, just harvested and cured, it is estimated will amount to 160,000 cases, distributed as follows:—40,000 cases of Connecticut river tobacco, 40,000 cases of Ohio, 30,000 cases of Pennsylvania, 25,000 cases of Wisconsin, 20,000 cases of New York, and 5,000 cases of Illinois tobacco. This crop, it is believed, will be the largest ever grown in this country, the average yield being 60,000 cases. The heavy crop of 1863 amounted to 85,000 cases, and reduced prices one-half. The consumption of domestic tobacco is placed at 60,000 cases per annum, and the export of 1872 is estimated at 70,000 cases. The stock of tobacco on hand amounts to about 40,000 cases, and, adding this to the 160,000 cases of the crop of 1871, there will be a total of 200,000 cases. Subtracting from these figures the 130,000 cases consumed at home and abroad there will remain a surplus of 70,000 cases.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE King of the Belgians has sent to Prince Arthur the insignia and grand cordon of the Order of Leopold.

THE Corporation of London has contributed 100 guineas towards the expenses of the expedition in search of Dr. Livingstone.

A RAG-PICKER of Paris has died and left behind him 350 MS. plays. Two only saw the light. The remainder have, however, now a fair chance of doing so, as they will most likely be burnt, if not sold for transportation to England.

The following is a list of game killed during the four days' shooting at Bradgate Park by Lord Stamford and Warrington and friends: Hares, 29, 192, 238, 36—545; rabbits, 83, 523, 318, 598—1,527; partridges, 2, 29, 23, 4—55; pheasants, 23, 252, 389, 186—850; woodcocks, 1, 5—6; snipe, 1; various, 1, 6, 2, 2—11; total, 144, 1,003, 1,020, 831—2,993.

KING LUDWIG of Bavaria has ordered the erection at Oberammergau of a colossal crucifix in marble. The statue, or rather group of statues, which will be erected on the so-called Mount of Olives, will be executed by Professor Halbig, of Munich. Each figure is to be 11 feet high, the whole of the monument rising to nearly 40 feet.

LONDON WINTER GARDEN.—Somebody revives a suggestion often made heretofore that a winter garden under glass should be established in London, where, during such odious weather as we have sometimes, wholesome air and exercise may be obtained in a properly regulated temperature by persons subject to bronchitis or who are afflicted with delicate lungs. Such a building, it is said, will become a favourite resort in the winter months. The only consideration is the expense. A great many other useful and fancy projects can be brought to a termination if that item stands not in the way.

SUNFLOWER AS A PREVENTIVE OF FEVER.—All those who live in malarial districts should, if possible, test the asserted influence of sunflower cultivation in removing the sources of fever. German, Italian, and French savans have testified as to its efficacy in this respect. An account comes to us from Holland of a landowner on the low banks of the Scheldt who planted three or four plots of sunflowers a few yards from his house, with such effect that for ten years there has not been a case of miasmatic fever among the tenants of his property, though the disease continues to prevail in the neighbourhood.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MILDRED B.—It is essential to state the age.
W. T. G.—The back numbers can be obtained.
GRACE.—A chemist will be a better judge, as he will have the advantage of an interview.
SLY PUSY.—There is plenty of time. Some one will seek you by-and-by.
CHARLOTTE H. and MAUD L.—The announcement of your wishes is premature.
MULTUM IN PARVO.—The particulars should have been sent, the intention to do so will not suffice.
SCOTCH LASSIE.—1. The handwriting is admirable. 2. The colour of hair dark brown.
RUBY.—1. The handwriting is pretty and bold. 2. The colour of hair appears to be flaxen.
MAY H.—The handwriting is very good. The announcement contains two orthographical errors.
U. U. C.—Your memorandum is before us, but the "Hymns" therein referred to have not come to hand.
QUEENSTOWN.—The proper course is to make application to some wholesale dealer.
HILDA.—All your trouble is in vain, because the age neither of Margaret nor yourself has been given.
THOMAS DIAMOND and FRIENDS.—It is desirable to wait until you return from the cruise that is in prospect.
J. T. S.—The distance at which you are situated and the time at which you will be disengaged are both so remote that we cannot comply with your wishes.
E. W. A.—A cement made of strong gum-water and plaster of Paris will answer your purpose; polish with an old silk handkerchief.
DOROTHEA.—1. The handwriting, though good, possesses no style beyond legibility. 2. The colour of the hair is a pretty light brown.
J. R.—Use the juice of green walnut peels. It must be carefully applied with a brush. The juice is precipitated by means of salt. It will not be an unserviceable trial of patience to wait until the autumn.
J. T. (Falmouth).—The letters form a Greek word which, in the instance referred to, may be taken to mean "For ever thine." Of course the sentiment applies to the donor, not to the trinket.
CHARLOTTE J. W.—It is impossible to judge fairly from a fragmentary portion. Were we, notwithstanding, pressed for an opinion we could not speak favourably of the attempt.
H. O.—1. Yes. The stamps are impressed with the word "Draft" as well as "Receipt." 2. A steam hammer has been made capable of giving 700 strokes per minute.
ALICE.—We are rather pleased with your verses. They want a little more finish to make them quite acceptable. No doubt he deserves it, but what a fearful impression!
CHARLES M.—It is not desirable for you to think of making an engagement until five or six years have elapsed. During that time you can learn many useful things.
LIVELY LARK.—Your pseudonym is unfortunately chosen, if the present gratification of your wishes is of consequence, for it were a pity, we think, that the lark should be caged until two or three years have passed. Sing on sweetly, unmolested, and free for that time.
ANTIQUARIAN (Glasgow).—We know nothing about the firm inquired for, but the print about which you write is often to be seen in some of the London shops. If you commissioned a friend to search at some of the old booksellers' and printers', we should say he would have no difficulty in finding a copy.
JOE H. and HIS FRIENDS.—For six correspondents to write upon one sheet of paper is an economical arrangement no doubt; but it is so remarkably inconvenient to us that it is passed without more notice than that the substance as well as the form of the communication must be amended before it can receive the expected attention.
SWEET MARTHA.—The mixture is unexceptionable. You are recommended, however, not to place too much reliance upon artificial means. Nature's beauty or deficiency, luxuriance or scantiness, is often unalterable. There is of course her power of compensation always at work, by which she gives an excellence of another kind to make up for some original want which will never be supplied.
ANNETTE G.—The chameleon is a species of reptile of which the slow pace, the awkward movement, the vivacity of eye, and the rapidity of tongue have frequently excited the wonder of mankind. Its change of colour,

by no means so marked or sudden as supposed, depends upon the degree of light or obscurity to which the reptile is exposed, upon its own feelings of fear or anger, and upon the action of its lungs upon its circulating system. The colour varies from a bluish-ash colour to a green and sometimes yellowish colour, spotted unequally with red.

ANNIE.—Writers upon the history of jewels allude to the various superstitions attached to precious stones by Oriental and other nations. There is a translation from a Persian manuscript in which it is said that the attributes of the ruby are to purify the blood, quench thirst, dispel melancholy, insure honour and competence. We trust you are not superstitious, and will attach only the proper value to these subtle fancies.

JACK ACRES.—The root of the word "Yankee" if it is to be found at all, must be searched for amongst the dialects of the North American Indians. They called the original English settlers by that name, which has been interpreted to mean "from across the sea;" this does not, however, appear to be supported by any authority. The appellation formerly given to travellers from afar afterwards came to be popularly applied to citizens of the United States generally.

INDIA RUBBER.—A durable joint, capable of resisting a considerable pressure of steam, can be made as follows: Mix together, in about equal proportions, boiled linseed oil, litharge, red lead, and white lead; lay the mixture on both sides of a flat india-rubber ring prepared for the purpose, place the ring thus covered with the mixture between the two pipes you wish to join, then force them close together. The cement will dry the more quickly in proportion to the predominance of red lead over white lead.

THE HOME OF LONG AGO.

I'm dreaming of my dear old home,
My home of long ago,
While memories come back to me
Of days I used to know.

I ramble o'er the meadow green,
And by the babbling rill;
And underneath the chestnut-tree
I sit upon the hill.

The favourite nooks I loved so well—
Again each one I see;
And every where familiar scenes
Come back again to me.

Oh! never once shall I forget
My home of long ago;
I treasure it like golden dreams
Of days I used to know.

S. A. M.

S. M.—That's a rather odd notion of yours to send us two pages of "poetry" with a request that we should "correct all mistakes" and insert them. We might in our turn mistake the inspirations of your genius, and alter what you consider to be the "tit bits" or others might term the very essence of your argument. May the divine muse ever preserve us from such a piece of presumption as is involved in the attempt to amend an author's poetical expressions, and may the custom of our craft never impose upon us such an Herculean, indeed such an impossible task. The answer to your postscript is—tattoo marks cannot be removed.

MARY S.—1. To make a custard take four fresh eggs, break and well beat them; add four ounces of powdered loaf sugar, one pint of milk, twenty drops of essence of ratifia; put this mixture into a dish and the dish into an oven, bake gently for one hour. 2. The ingredients of a bread pudding are two French rolls or one pound of stale bread, soak in half a pint of new milk for one hour, add three ounces of currants, six ounces of powdered loaf sugar, two fresh eggs, and another half-pint of milk. Either bake or boil for one hour. 3. Puff paste is made thus: Take one pound of flour, mix it with three tablespoonfuls of water and a pinch of salt; roll the mixture out on a pasteboard three times, on each occasion spread a quarter of a pound of salt butter over it, dredging it well with flour. 4. Eighteen is about the age when a girl should turn up her hair. 5. The colours of the looks forwarded are light brown and dusky light brown. Is it possible that you did not know the answer to this last query?

NELL, twenty, medium height, fair, blue eyes. Respondent must be tall, dark, sober, steady, and in a good position.

CHARLOTTE J., twenty-one, short, stout figure, dark eyes and hair, quiet, and loving. Respondent must be good tempered and have full whiskers.

BOMBARDIER, 5ft. 8in., rather dark complexion, blue eyes, dark hair, good looking, and kind. Respondent must be fair, tall, about twenty-six, fond of home, and good tempered.

ANNIE, nineteen, tall, dark, good looking, loving, fond of home, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be tall, fair, good looking, and able to keep a wife comfortably; a tradesman preferred.

F. J. R., twenty-four, dark complexion, good looking, moderate income, with good expectations. Respondent must be good tempered and good looking; a young widow preferred.

G. H. F., twenty, short, stout, dark complexion, dark curly hair. Respondent must be fair, fond of home, have a loving disposition, and no objection to emigrate to America.

E. T., twenty-one, tall, fair, affectionate disposition, has a limited income, though enough to keep a wife. Respondent must have a little money and be willing to go abroad.

BLANCHET Y., eighteen, medium height, pretty, has a genteel figure, dark brown eyes, long hair, of the same colour, and is loving. Respondent must be rather dark, with moustache, cheerful, and steady.

DOLLY VANDER, seventeen, medium height, fair complexion, blue eyes, aquiline nose, cherry lips, fond of singing. Respondent must be tall, dark, very musical, and have curly hair and slight moustache.

FALLON T. H., forty-five, a mechanic of medium height and sober habits, a widower with one child, a boy nine

years old. Would like to marry a respectable woman between thirty-five and forty-five or a widow.

BEATRICE, eighteen, tall, dark hair, hazel eyes, graceful, Roman nose, small hands and feet, fond of music. Respondent must be fair, tall, good tempered, and have curly hair, moustache, and imperial.

E. A., twenty, 5ft. 4in., good looking, dark hair and eyes, affectionate; would have no objection to go abroad if required. Respondent must be rather tall, good looking, steady, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

LOUIS and LILLY B.—"Louis," twenty-one, medium height, fair, good tempered, has a small income. "Lilly," nineteen, tall, dark, and fond of home. Respondents must be dark, good looking, and good tempered.

NELLIE S., thirty-five, 5ft. 2in., fair, gray eyes, brown hair, good figure, loving, fond of home, thoroughly domesticated, good needlewoman, and housekeeper. Would like to marry a tradesman of middle age; a widower with children not objected to.

HARRIET Z., nineteen, 5ft. 11in., light brown hair, blue eyes, good figure, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, gentlemanly, fond of home, have a moderate income, and be not more than four-and-twenty.

LOUISA Y., twenty-one, medium height, genteel figure, light brown hair, dark blue eyes, fair complexion, good singer, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, full figure, gentlemanly, between twenty-three and twenty-six, loving, and fond of home.

TOM BOWLING, twenty-four, 5ft. 9in., fair complexion, hazel eyes, brown hair, whiskers, and moustache, a petty officer in the Navy. Wishes to marry a young person of domesticated habits, dark complexion, and one who loves a sailor.

MAY, seventeen, medium height, brown hair, dark gray eyes, pretty, loving, and fond of home. Respondent must be tall, dark, good looking, about twenty-five; the medical profession preferred. "May" is possessed of an annuity, and has the hope of succeeding to property when of age.

HENRY C., twenty-six, earning a salary of 6l. per month, wishes to settle down in life and to have a loving, domesticated wife; he would prefer a domestic servant, as he thinks she would be the best and most economical sort of wife. He does not wish for a pretty but a sterling good wife.

BELLA B., twenty, 5ft. 4in., would like to marry a respectable, steady, and industrious young man about twenty-four; she is pretty, with dark brown hair, hazel eyes, loving, and domesticated, she lives in the country. Is a tradesman's daughter, and will make a good wife to a loving husband. "Bella's" sister, "Pussy," would like to marry a mechanic; she is eighteen, good looking, very pretty, has brown hair and hazel eyes, with a beautiful colour.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

E. G. B. is responded to by—"Melville H.," twenty-two, medium height, fair complexion, gray eyes, very affectionate, fond of music, and has a great desire to go abroad.

CARRIE by—"A Glasgow Chappie," twenty-eight, disposition exactly what "Carrie" desires.

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ANNETTE S. by—"E. S.," a widower with one girl six years old; a tradesman fond of home and loving to children.

GWYNETH by—"Marion," nineteen, medium height, slender, ladylike, good looking, is of a very loving disposition, and thinks she would suit "Gwyneth."

TOBY by—"Mary A. W.," thirty, not very tall, dark hair and eyes, will make a good wife, being of an affectionate disposition and good tempered.

MAUDE by—"George W. G.," twenty-one, 5ft. 10in., a draughtsman and engraver by profession, in receipt of a fair salary in addition to a small private income, fair complexion, brown hair, very musical, fond of reading, and has an even good temper.

HANCOCK by—"H. H.," seventeen, dark hair and eyes, has a loving heart;—"Maudie," twenty, tall, brown hair and eyes, loving, and fond of home; and—"Annie G.," eighteen, tall, dark hair, dark eyes, good tempered, loving, and would make a good wife.

BLANCHET wishes to hear from "E. G. T." The following cannot be inserted:—"Elsie Gray," "Jack Junk," "Royal Sheet," "Fred," "Charles," "Bill Backstay," and "Harry Bluff."

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